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CHRISTIANITY AND AGNOSTICISM

CHRISTIANITY AND AGNOSTICISM

REVIEWS OF SOME RECENT ATTACKS ON THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

BY

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PREFACE.

THE leading Essays in this volume arose from a paper on Agnosticism, which, at the urgent request of an old friend, I read before the Church Congress at Manchester in 1888. It was attacked by Professor Huxley, in an article published in the 'Nineteenth Century' for February 1889, in a manner which obliged me to reply. He published a rejoinder, to which I replied again; and the controversy was concluded in a third article by him, as the editor could not allow it to be prolonged. I should have been satisfied to let it rest, as the main points for which I had contended seemed to me sufficiently established by the Professor's own admissions; but as he has reprinted his articles in a more lasting form, — first, in a volume entitled 'Essays on Controverted Questions,' and lately in the edition of his works

collected in the Eversley Series, — it seems only due to the cause I represented, as well as to myself, to reprint my own arguments in a form accessible to the general reader. This seems the more requisite, because the Professor did not feel himself able, in his own volumes, to reprint any of the arguments to which he was replying; although "there is," he acknowledged, in his preface to 'Controverted Questions,' "an air of unfairness about the presentation of only one side of a discussion." In the present reprint of my own articles, I have endeavoured, on my part, to obviate any such unfairness, as far as possible, by giving in the notes the passages from Professor Huxley's articles to which my arguments refer. The reader, I hope, will thus find the case at issue placed fairly before him.

My articles in this controversy are supported by some essays which I had previously contributed to the 'Quarterly Review.' The Professor warned his readers, with a magisterial authority, "against any reliance upon Dr Wace's statements as to the results arrived at by modern criticism," and it is desirable that the reader should have some means of judging of the justice of this impeachment of my credibility respecting such matters of fact. Such evidence

he will find in these articles from the 'Quarterly,' especially in the first, on "The Historical Criticism of the New Testament," in which an account was given, two years before the present controversy, of the statements of Dr Holtzmann, to whom Professor Huxley himself appeals, respecting the results of German criticism of the New Testament. An earlier article, in the Appendix, on "The Speaker's Commentary," affords some further information on the same subject.

To these articles, which I hope will furnish the reader with sufficient materials for a review of this particular controversy, are added an article on the late Mr Cotter Morison's attack on Christianity in his volume entitled 'The Service of Man,' and another on 'Robert Elsmere,' both published in the 'Quarterly Review.' Each of these reviews deals with some important points in the current controversy with Agnosticism, and may therefore serve to supplement the arguments in the other papers.

It may be proper for me to add some observations on a wider aspect of the question, involved in the contrast continually urged by Agnostics between the results and the methods of Science and Faith. It is not, indeed, necessary to dwell on any supposed discrepancy be-

tween results in these two spheres of human thought. Any difficulties found in this respect, however important and interesting at a given moment, can never be other than temporary. Sooner or later, on any point of detail, the truth is ascertained, and assertions on either side inconsistent with the truth are as a matter of course given up. I say, on either side; for Science has had its errors as well as Theology, and has certainly, in the course of centuries, had to surrender not less deeply-rooted prejudices than those by which theologians have sometimes been held in fetters. Such discrepancies in detail may be said to settle themselves if people will only have patience, and will make sure of their facts before troubling themselves with alleged divergencies and possible reconciliations. In his essay, for example, on 'The Lights of the Church and the Light of Science,' reprinted in 'Science and Hebrew Tradition,' Professor Huxley alleges that the Deluge, as described in the book of Genesis, is a physical impossibility; that the story "is merely a Bowdlerised version of one of the oldest pieces of purely fictitious literature extant" (p. 229); and that "at the present time it is difficult to persuade serious scientific inquirers to occupy themselves, in any way, with

the Noachian Deluge." Yet Sir William Dawson, who, not only as a Fellow of the Royal Society, but as not long ago President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, must, I suppose, be regarded as a serious scientific inquirer, in his interesting work on 'Modern Science in Bible Lands,' published only two years previously, says that "it is not necessary to point out the remarkable agreements of the Bible and observation with respect to the deluge, or the light which they mutually cast on each other" (p. 220); and he further observes (p. 218) that there are indications of the narrative proceeding "from an eye-witness, or one who represents himself as such." Whereas, moreover, Professor Huxley, in 'Science and Hebrew Tradition,' labours in essay after essay to show that the first chapter of Genesis is inconsistent with the revelations of geological science, Sir William Dawson, in the 'Expositor' for February of this year (p. 119), says of that chapter that "we have here a consistent scheme of the development of the solar system, and especially of the earth, agreeing in the main with the results of modern astronomy and geology. It would not be easy," he adds, "even now to construct a statement of the development of the world in popular terms so concise and so accu-

rate." No doubt Fellows of the Royal Society will some day be in substantial agreement on the matters of fact which thus divide these two distinguished members of their body; but until they are, it cannot at all events be alleged that the established results of Science exhibit any discrepancies with the narrative of Genesis.

The history, in fact, of the past ought to convince us that difficulties in detail of this kind need cause no one any anxiety; but the question of the comparative validity of those two mental processes which are understood by the general titles of Faith and Science requires careful attention. There is an attempt on the part of a certain circle of scientific men, and of some philosophers, to represent scientific methods as entirely distinct from those by which our religious beliefs are formed, and as the sole methods on which we are justified in forming any beliefs at all. This is the contention of that form of Agnosticism which Professor Huxley defends; and in his first essay in the present controversy, reprinted in 'Science and Christian Tradition' (p. 310), he thus states his meaning: "Speaking for myself," he writes, ". . . I say that Agnosticism is not properly described as a 'negative' creed, nor indeed as a creed of any kind, except in so

far as it expresses absolute faith in the validity of a principle, which is as much ethical as intellectual. This principle may be stated in various ways, but they all amount to this: that it is wrong for a man to say that he is certain of the objective truth of any proposition unless he can produce evidence which logically justifies the certainty. This is what Agnosticism asserts, and, in my opinion, it is all that is essential to Agnosticism. That which Agnostics deny and repudiate, as immoral, is the contrary doctrine, that there are propositions which men ought to believe, without logical and satisfactory evidence; and that reprobation ought to attach to the profession of disbelief in such inadequately supported propositions."

Now such a statement raises an issue respecting the grounds of belief, which is independent of the particular creeds or propositions which may be at any time in question; and it is simply necessary to inquire whether the principle laid down by Professor Huxley is either true, or adapted to the facts and necessities of human life. Such an inquiry will, I think, show that, in principle, the foundations of faith have very much in common with the foundations of science, and that very similar impulses to those by which science is promoted and maintained have been

operative, and are operative still, in the maintenance and production of faith.

Let us imagine, for the sake of illustration, a philosopher from some other planet, endued with superhuman powers of observation, to visit this earth, and to take a survey of the condition of the whole human race. He would observe, as one of the first and most impressive facts, that men were for the most part collected into vast groups, all of whom were governed in their daily life, and general principles of conduct and action, by similar habits and principles. He would notice the facts which we describe as the existence of various forms of civilisation. He would observe the whole of Europe and of America governed, in the main, by certain moral and religious principles which give them a distinct unity. He would observe that Asia, from the shores of the Ægean to a great part of India, was under the supremacy of a wholly different civilisation, with distinct principles of family life, of social manners, and of moral and religious habits. In great part of India, however, he would find another system of civilisation supreme, and in the forms of Brahmanism and Buddhism he would notice compact worlds of human life, with sympathies, principles, and interests peculiar to themselves. Let him pass the Himalayas, and

he finds himself in a new civilisation, that of China, in which the largest empire in the world is held together on principles of duty, and of social organisation, distinct from either of the others. These various civilisations are from time to time coming into conflict with one another; and their collisions—their collisions as masses, and not merely those of particular nations —have occasioned the most momentous events in the world's history. By each of these civilisations, as a whole, the fate of individuals is determined. According as a man finds himself born into one of them, or into another, the whole course of his thought, feeling, and action, except in rare instances, will be determined. The existence, in fact, of these civilisations is the first and most momentous phenomenon in human life, as that life would be presented to the eye of such a superhuman observer as I am supposing.

Having thus observed the fact, he would proceed to inquire into its cause; and of this there can practically be no doubt. At the root of each of these civilisations are religious or philosophical principles, which have been accepted by the great mass of men in faith or trust. There are, at all events, great regions of conviction, within all those spheres of life, which have not been determined by purely scientific reasons, and

cannot be supported by anything that could be described as "logically satisfactory evidence." Men have, so to say, reached out from what they could see or prove; and relying mainly on the authority of great leaders like Mohammed, Buddha, or Confucius, they live and die for beliefs which they could never demonstrate. Here, then, is a phenomenon of human nature, exhibited on the largest possible scale, and it must be taken therefore to represent a law of that nature — a principle of action which men in general instinctively adopt. Is it probable that any such principle is radically unjustifiable? It is no presumption against it that its results have been hitherto so imperfect, and in most cases erroneous, unless it can be shown that it tends to increasing error, and that it has not, on the whole, had a beneficial tendency. Reason and Science themselves have produced and maintained erroneous results; but we trust them none the less, in the assurance that their patient and continued employment has corrected, and will further correct, such errors. Faith, in the same way, has produced false religions; but if it has also produced a true one, its continued exercise is likely to be the natural means of spreading that true religion, and dispersing the false ones. At all events, in

the spectacle we have been contemplating, we behold in action a stupendous force—certainly the most powerful motive force which human history exhibits; and it would seem inconsistent with all principles of prudence and common-sense that it should simply be rejected as illegitimate, and not less inconsistent with due respect to human nature that it should be denounced as "immoral." What the philosopher is called upon to do is to analyse it, to examine its capacities, and thus to assist in using it aright. The wise course to pursue with any general instinct of nature is to bring it into order and under control, not to suppress it because it is powerful and dangerous.

Now, Professor Huxley himself tells us that there is one grand exception to his rule of making certain of nothing for which we cannot adduce logical and satisfactory evidence, and it is remarkable that this exception forms the basis of the whole superstructure of Science. "It is quite true," he said, in his first article in this controversy, "that the ground of every one of our actions, and the validity of all our reasonings, rest upon the great act of faith, which leads us to take the experience of the past as a safe guide in our dealings with the present and the

future."[1] I should have thought the act of faith in question consisted rather in taking the experience of the present as a safe guide in our dealings with the past and future. We know nothing about the past excepting on the supposition, on "the great act of faith," that the same causes were in operation formerly as are in operation now. But it is a singular position to assert in one breath, or rather in one month, that it is immoral and unjustifiable to accept propositions without logically satisfactory evidence, and in another breath, or another month, to say that the validity of all our reasonings rests on a great act of faith; and further, that, "from the nature of ratiocination, it is obvious that the axioms, on which it is based, cannot be demonstrated by ratiocination." If faith be at the basis of all our reasonings, it seems unlikely that it should have no place in the superstructure. But the Professor further admits (p. 244) "the profound psychological truth that men constantly feel certain about things for which they strongly hope, but have no evidence, in the legal or logical sense of the word. . . . I may have the most absolute faith that a friend has not committed the crime of which he is accused. . . . Miserable indeed is the man who has not such

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 243.

faith in some of his fellow-men." Consequently, by this admission, the primary condition for the noblest elements of life, of affection and mutual devotion, is an act of that very kind which Professor Huxley denounces as immoral—namely, saying you are certain of the truth and innocence of your friend, although you may not be able to produce evidence which logically sustains that certainty. It will probably be felt that a general proposition which requires to have excepted from its operation the very ground of all reasonings, and the very conditions of friendship and social life, can hardly be considered a practical rule. Exceptions are said to prove rules, but exceptions may be so numerous and so weighty as to disprove the rule, and this appears to be such a case.

It may well, indeed, be doubted whether people are generally aware how slight, as a matter of fact, is the evidence accessible to them, or to any one, on which the most confident conclusions of history and of science may rest. As to history, I will mention only one example, which seems to be particularly striking. Probably there is hardly any book of history which is received with more unquestioning acquiescence than the writings of Thucydides. They are our only contemporary authority for some

of the most interesting, most instructive, and most important occurrences in civilised history; and, as written by an historical genius of the first order, they hold a foremost place in the history of human thought. Now what is the evidence accessible to us that this work was written by that Thucydides to whom all the world confidently ascribes it? I cannot discover, after inquiry among some of our best living scholars, that there is any mention at all of Thucydides having written this book until more than two hundred years after he died. The fact is not mentioned by the historian who narrates the subsequent history — Xenophon; and the very first extant notice of the history of Thucydides is by Polybius. Now Thucydides died about the year 400 B.C., and Polybius was born about the year 204 B.C. Polybius seems to have written his history towards the close of his life, and he died in the year 122 B.C. It will be seen, therefore, that we are much under the mark in saying that his testimony is more than two hundred years after the death of Thucydides. This silence is all the more remarkable, as we have works, like Aristotle's Politics, in which it might have been expected that so great an historical writer would have been referred to. But there does not seem to

be any such reference to him extant. Now, a single fact of this kind—and several others of the same sort might be adduced — affords a striking commentary on the rigidness with which we are not unfrequently called on to adduce direct and explicit evidence to our sacred books from contemporary writers. But what is important for our present purpose is to point out that here is an instance in which the most confident historical judgments are rested upon very slight external evidence.

But it is next to be observed that some of the greatest advances in Science itself have been made by men who have been earnestly convinced of truths, for which it was impossible for them to adduce logically satisfactory evidence. The most striking instance that occurs to me is the assertion of what is now generally known as the Copernican system. It is striking to reflect that we are less than three centuries distant from days when that system was deemed, even by men of the highest eminence and learning, to be not only false but absurd. Lord Bacon, in his essay in 'Praise of Knowledge,' speaks in passing contempt of those "few," or new, "carmen which drive the earth about." Copernicus died in 1543, and it was nearly one hundred years afterwards that Galileo neu-

tralised the abjuration which was wrung from him by the exclamation, "*E pur se muove.*" A hundred years' hard struggle had to be maintained by the followers of Copernicus before their master's theory became an acknowledged fact. Does any one suppose that the struggle was maintained without earnest belief on the part of those who were working out the system? Can it be questioned that they felt practically certain of it, in spite of the difficulties with which it seemed to be surrounded, and the opposition with which it was met? When Galileo said "*E pur se muove,*" his knowledge of the facts of the solar system was still very imperfect; and much more was this the case with Copernicus himself. Indeed it is stated in an article on Copernicus in the 'English Cyclopædia,' which, from internal evidence, may probably be ascribed to the late Professor De Morgan, that "if the mechanics of Copernicus had been true, the system of Copernicus would have been physically impossible." Or take, again, a case nearer home, the theory of evolution, which now commends such general assent. Did the followers of Darwin wait to express the conviction they felt of the truth of their theory until they had "logically satisfactory" proof of it? Had they not to admit

that there were gaps in the evidence, points of difficulty which, with their present knowledge, could not be explained away? But it commended itself to their minds as a great induction, which was sure to be proved; and they acted as if they were practically certain of it.

In a word, the history of great scientific discoveries may be described as that of a sort of prophetic induction. Great minds, perhaps because endowed with a comprehensive power of observation, seem to discern the truth long before it is visible to ordinary eyes, and long before it is capable of proof. They proclaim their belief in it, they excite the ardour of sympathetic conviction in others, and thus the world of knowledge and thought moves on from stage to stage. That which governs this movement is that law of probability, which Bishop Butler has said is the very guide of life. It is in great measure by resting on probable arguments, by trusting them, and experimenting on the faith of them, that scientific advances are made. There are thus two elements combined in any great scientific movement. There is first the inductive genius, which, from the facts already open to its observation, discerns a principle of general application, a law of nature,

even though it cannot as yet be thoroughly established; there is next the trust and enthusiasm which this genius evokes from sympathetic minds: in consequence of these two influences there is a combined effort at further observation and experiment, and at length, though often after a long struggle with old prejudices, the truth is established.

But, as has been pointed out, the growth of religious faith exhibits a very similar process. It is given to some great man—whether by supernatural inspiration or not, need not, for our present purpose, be considered—to discern some great spiritual principle. He announces it as the key to the problems of the moral universe, and his genius and enthusiasm ensure him followers. They are animated, partly by the glimpses they catch of the same idea, and partly by trust and devotion to their master; and the result is that they make an experiment on a vast scale, and become the founders of a new religion and civilisation. It constitutes, indeed, an important difference between such a case and that of scientific discoveries that, since a religious experiment involves action of a most momentous character, perpetuating itself in subsequent generations, it

has immediate practical consequences of a very far-reaching extent. But that does not alter the fact that the one process is marked by characteristics very similar to those of the other. Undoubtedly, in matters of such moment as the proclamation of a new religious truth, the responsibility of a man who induces his fellows to make an experiment of such a nature is great in the extreme, and there was, perhaps, a wholesome justice in the plain language which used to be customary respecting false prophets. On the other hand, it is impossible to witness without sympathy and admiration this instinctive trust of the human race, and this eagerness to grasp at solutions of the higher problems of existence. If men have erred in the pursuit of these mistaken religions, they have to a great extent been the victims of very noble impulses. They have but snatched too eagerly at the highest truth which the human mind can conceive, and they have exhibited unbounded trust and generosity. That, however, with which we are concerned at present is that the nature of the religious process is in great measure cognate to that of science. Faith may be hasty induction, it may be rash trust; but it is induction still, and it is the same

kind of confidence in a leader and teacher as that which all generous students of science indulge.

If, moreover, we ask what is to be our guard and guarantee in the exercise of our faculties in the sphere of Faith, the reply is, again, the same resource, in great measure, which is our guard and guarantee in the case of Science. Let us test our suppositions by all the rational and critical methods in our power. Let the great inductions of Faith, sustained by the testimony of the great leaders of religious and moral truth, be put to the severest tests of reason which can be applied to them. Do not, indeed, let us be called upon to refrain from indulging those inductions, or to forbear putting them to the proof by staking our lives upon them, until they can be logically established; but by all means let us apply those logical tests to them in as great a degree as possible, and so correct our inductions, and clarify our beliefs, by every means open to us. The contention of reasonable Christian men is not that they are under an obligation to believe certain doctrines, whether rational or not, but that, on the whole, the truths of the Christian religion appear to them the best induction that can be made from the

facts open to our observation in the religious and moral world; and that in matters not open to our observation we have the strongest reasons ever afforded to trust that Master and those teachers by whom assurances respecting the unseen and the future have been conveyed to us. We believe that, just as science has been verified by experience, so the assertions of the Christian revelation have been verified, more and more, by the experience alike of history and of individuals. They correspond, in our judgment, to the facts of the case, and of the whole case, better than any other principles yet made known to us. We claim, accordingly, to stand, to a great extent, on similar ground to men of science, the difference mainly lying in the extent of the observations open to us for the purpose of our inductions; so that in the sphere of religion we are obliged to trust in a greater degree to the assurances of those who are wiser than ourselves, or whom we believe to have had special means of information. In a word, though personal trust is the great motive power and the chief strength of faith, the methods relied upon in matters of religious belief are in great measure similar to those of science; and we claim therefore to be as true to the canons of induc-

tion, and to the sound principles of argument, as any natural philosopher.

It remains for me to express my thanks to the proprietors of the 'Nineteenth Century' and of the 'Quarterly Review' for their kindness in permitting me to reprint the following articles.

HENRY WACE.

King's College,
London, *Dec.* 1894.

The second edition has been revised, and a few oversights and inaccuracies of expression have been corrected.

King's College,
London, *June* 1895.

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THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, AND RECENT AGNOSTIC ATTACKS.

ON AGNOSTICISM.

The following paper was read at the Manchester Church Congress in September 1888, and gave occasion for the articles by Professor Huxley to which the two following papers reply.

What is Agnosticism? In the new Oxford Dictionary of the English Language we are told that "an Agnostic is one who holds that the existence of anything beyond and behind natural phenomena is unknown, and (so far as can be judged) unknowable, and especially that a First Cause and an unseen world are subjects of which we know nothing." The same authority quotes a letter from Mr R. H. Hutton, stating that the

word was suggested in his hearing, at a party held in 1869, by Professor Huxley, who took it from St Paul's mention of the altar at Athens to the Unknown God. "Agnostic," it is further said, in a passage quoted from the 'Spectator' of June 11, 1876, "was the name demanded by Professor Huxley for those who disclaimed Atheism, and believed with him in an unknown and unknowable God, or, in other words, that the ultimate origin of all things must be some cause unknown and unknowable." Again, the late honoured Bishop of Manchester is quoted as saying, in the 'Manchester Guardian' in 1880, that "the Agnostic neither denied nor affirmed God. He simply put Him on one side." The designation was suggested, therefore, for the purpose of avoiding a direct denial of beliefs respecting God such as are asserted by our faith. It proceeds, also, from a scientific source, and claims the scientific merit, or habit, of reserving opinion respecting matters not known or proved.

Now, we are not here concerned with this doctrine as a mere question of abstract philosophy respecting the limits of our natural capacities. We have to consider it in relation to the Church and to Christianity, and the main consideration which it is the purpose of this

paper to suggest is that, in this relation, the adoption of the term Agnostic is only an attempt to shift the issue, and that it involves a mere evasion. A Christian catechism says: "First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me, and all the world; secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me, and all mankind; thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God." The Agnostic says, "How do you know all that? I consider I have no means of knowing these things you assert respecting God. I do not know, and cannot know, that God is a Father, and that He has a Son; and I do not and cannot know that such a Father made me, or that such a Son redeemed me." But the Christian did not speak of what he knew, but of what he believed. The first word of a Christian is not "I know," but "I believe." He professes, not a science, but a faith; and at baptism he accepts, not a theory, but a creed.

Now, it is true that in one common usage of the word, belief is practically equivalent to opinion. A man may say he believes in a scientific theory, meaning that he is strongly of opinion that it is true; or, in still looser language, he may say he believes it is going to be a fine day. I would observe, in passing, that

even in this sense of the word, a man who refused to act upon what he could not know would be a very unpractical person. If you are suffering from an obscure disease, you go to a doctor to obtain, not his knowledge of your malady, but his opinion; and upon that opinion, in defiance of other opinions, even an Emperor may have to stake his life. Similarly, from what is known of the proceedings in Parliament respecting the Manchester Ship Canal, it may be presumed that engineers were not unanimous as to the possibilities and advantages of that undertaking; but Manchester men were content to act upon the best opinion, and to stake fortunes on their belief in it. However, it may be sufficient to have just alluded to the old and unanswered contention of Bishop Butler that, even if Christian belief and Christian duty were mere matters of probable opinion, a man who said in regard to them, "I do not know, and therefore I will not act," would be abandoning the first principle of human energy. He might be a philosopher; but he would not be a man—not at least, I fancy, according to the standard of Lancashire.

But there is another sense of the word "belief," which is of far more importance for our present subject. There is belief which is founded on the

assurances of another person, and upon our trust in him. This sort of belief is not opinion, but faith; and it is this which has been the greatest force in creating religions, and through them in moulding civilisations. What made the Mahommedan world? Trust and faith in the declarations and assurances of Mahommed. And what made the Christian world? Trust and faith in the declarations and assurances of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. This is not mere believing about things; it is believing a man and believing in a man. Now, the point of importance for the present argument is, that the chief articles of the Christian creed are directly dependent on personal assurances and personal declarations, and that our acceptance of them depends on personal trust. Why do we believe that Jesus Christ redeemed all mankind? Because He said so. There is no other ultimate ground for it. The matter is not one open to the observation of our faculties; and as a matter of science we are not in a position to know it. The case is the same with His Divine Sonship and the office of His Spirit. He reveals Himself by His words and acts; and in revealing Himself He reveals His Father, and the Spirit who proceeds from both. His resurrection and His miracles afford us, as St Paul says, assurance of His divine mission.

But for our knowledge of His offices in relation to mankind, and of His nature in relation to God, we rest on His own words, confirmed and explained by those of His apostles. Who can dream of knowing, as a matter of science, that He is the Judge of quick and dead? But He speaks Himself, in the Sermon on the Mount, of that day when men will plead before Him, and when He will decide their fate; and Christians include in their creed a belief in that statement respecting the unseen and future world.

But if this be so, for a man to urge as an escape from this article of belief that he has no means of a scientific knowledge of the unseen world, or of the future, is irrelevant. His difference from Christians lies not in the fact that he has no knowledge of these things, but that he does not believe the authority on which they are stated. He may prefer to call himself an Agnostic; but his real name is an older one—he is an Infidel, that is to say, an unbeliever. The word Infidel, perhaps, carries an unpleasant significance. Perhaps it is right that it should. It is, and it ought to be, an unpleasant thing for a man to have to say plainly that he does not believe Jesus Christ. It is, indeed, an awful thing to say. But even men who are not conscious of all it involves shrink from the ungraciousness, if

from nothing more, of treating the beliefs inseparably associated with that Sacred Person as an illusion. This, however, is what is really meant by Agnosticism; and the time seems to have come when it is necessary to insist upon the fact.

Of course there may be numberless attempts at respectful excuses or evasions, and there is one in particular which may require notice. It may be asked how far we can rely on the accounts we possess of our Lord's teaching on these subjects. Now, it is unnecessary for the general argument before us to enter on those questions respecting the authenticity of the Gospel narratives, which ought to be regarded as settled by M. Renan's practical surrender of the adverse case. Apart from all disputed points of criticism, no one practically doubts that our Lord lived, and that He died on the cross, in the most intense sense of filial relation to His Father in heaven, and that He bore testimony to that Father's providence, love, and grace towards mankind. The Lord's Prayer affords sufficient evidence upon these points. If the Sermon on the Mount alone be added, the whole unseen world, of which the Agnostic refuses to know anything, stands unveiled before us. There you see revealed the Divine Father and Creator of

all things, in personal relation to His creatures, hearing their prayers, witnessing their actions, caring for them and rewarding them. There you hear of a future judgment administered by Christ Himself, and of a heaven to be hereafter revealed, in which those who live as the children of that Father, and who suffer in the cause and for the sake of Christ Himself, will be abundantly rewarded. If Jesus Christ preached that sermon, made those promises, and taught that prayer, then any one who says that we know nothing of God, or of a future life, or of an unseen world, says that he does not believe Jesus Christ. Since the days when our Lord lived and taught, at all events, Agnosticism has been impossible without Infidelity.

Let it be observed, moreover, that to put the case in this way is not merely to make an appeal to authority. It goes further than that. It is in a vital respect an appeal to experience, and so far to science itself. It is an appeal to what I hope may be taken as, confessedly, the deepest and most sacred moral experience which has ever been known. No criticism worth mentioning doubts the story of the Passion ; and that story involves the most solemn attestation, again and again, of truths of which an Agnostic coolly says he knows nothing. An Agnosticism which knows

nothing of the relation of man to God must not only refuse belief to our Lord's most undoubted teaching, but must deny the reality of the spiritual convictions in which He lived and died. It must declare that His most intimate, most intense beliefs, and His dying aspirations, were an illusion. Is that supposition tolerable? It is because it is not tolerable that men would fain avoid facing it, and would have themselves called Agnostics rather than Infidels; but I know not whether this cool and supercilious disregard of that solemn teaching, and of that sacred life and death, be not more offensive than the downright denials which look their responsibility boldly in the face, and say, not only that they do not know, but that they do not believe. This question of living faith in a living God and Saviour, with all it involves, is too urgent and momentous a thing to be put aside with a philosophical "I don't know." The best blood of the world has been shed over it; the deepest personal, social, and even political problems are still bound up with it. The intensest moral struggles of humanity have centred round this question; and it is really intolerable that all this bitter experience of men and women who have trusted and prayed, and suffered and died, in faith, should be set aside, as not germane to a philosophical argument.

But, to say the least, from a purely scientific point of view, there is a portentous fallacy in the manner in which, in Agnostic arguments, the testimony, not only of our Lord, but of Psalmists, Prophets, Apostles, and Saints, is disregarded. So far as the Christian faith can be treated as a scientific question, it is a question of experience; and what is to be said of a science which leaves out of account the most conspicuous and most influential experience in the matter? One thing may be said with confidence: that it defeats itself, by disregarding the greatest force with which it has to contend. While philosophers are arguing as to the abstract capacities of human thought, as though our Lord had never lived and died, He Himself is still speaking; His words, as recorded by His Apostles and Evangelists, are still echoing over human hearts, touching their inmost affections, appealing to their deepest needs, commanding their profoundest trust, and awakening in them an apprehension of that Divine relation and those unseen realities in which their spirits live. While Agnostics are committing the enormous scientific, as well as moral, blunder of considering the relations of men to God and to an unseen world without taking His evidence into account, and then presuming to judge the faith He taught by their

own partial knowledge, His voice is still heard, in penetrating and comfortable words, bidding men believe in God and believe also in Himself. He, after all, is the one sufficient answer to Agnosticism, and, I will take the liberty of adding, to Atheism and to Pessimism also—not merely His authority, though that would be enough, but His life, His soul, Himself.

Accordingly, as our object here is to consider how to deal with these difficulties and objections, what these considerations would seem to point out is that we should take care to let Christ and Christ's own message be heard, and not to endure that they should be allowed to stand aside while a philosophical debate is proceeding. Philosophers are slow in these matters. They are still disputing, after some 2500 years of discussion, what is the true principle for determining moral right and wrong. Meanwhile, men have been content to live by the Ten Commandments, and the main lines of duty are plain. In the same way, religion has preceded the philosophy of religion; and men can be made sensible of their relation to God, whether it can be philosophically explained or not. The Psalms, the Prophets, and, above all, the Gospels, are plain evidence, in matter of fact, that men are in relation to God and owe duties to Him. Let men be made to

attend to the facts ; let them hear those simple, plain, and earnest witnesses ; above all, let them hear the voice of Christ, and they will at least believe, whatever may be the possibilities of knowledge. In a word, let us imitate St Paul when his converts were perplexed by Greek philosophies at Corinth : "I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God : for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

ON A DEFENCE OF AGNOSTICISM BY PROFESSOR HUXLEY.

The preceding paper was the chief subject of an article by Professor Huxley, published in the 'Nineteenth Century' for February 1889, and now reprinted in vol. v. of the Professor's 'Collected Essays,' entitled 'Science and Christian Tradition,' p. 209. To that article the following reply was published in the 'Nineteenth Century' for March 1889. A few introductory observations of purely personal and temporary interest are omitted.

It is a matter of justice to my cause and to myself to remove at once the unscientific and prejudiced representation of the case which Professor Huxley has put forward; and fortunately there will be no need of elaborate argument for this purpose. There is no occasion to go beyond Professor Huxley's own article and the language of my paper to exhibit his entire misapprehension of the point in dispute; while I am much more than content to rely for the invalidation of his own contentions upon the authorities he himself quotes.

What, then, is the position with which Professor Huxley finds fault? He is good enough to say that what he calls my "description" of an Agnostic may for the present pass, so that we are so far, at starting, on common ground. The actual description of an Agnostic which is given in my paper is indeed distinct from the words he quotes, and is taken from an authoritative source. But what I have said is that, as an escape from such an article of Christian belief as that we have a Father in heaven, or that Jesus Christ is the Judge of quick and dead, and will hereafter return to judge the world, an Agnostic urges that "he has no means of a scientific knowledge of the unseen world or of the future"; and I maintain that this plea is irrelevant. Christians do not presume to say that they have a scientific knowledge of such articles of their creed. They say that they believe them, and they believe them mainly on the assurances of Jesus Christ. Consequently their characteristic difference from an Agnostic consists in the fact that they believe those assurances, and that he does not. Professor Huxley's observation, "Are there, then, any Christians who say that they know nothing about the unseen world and the future? I was ignorant of the fact, but I am ready to accept

it on the authority of a professional theologian," is either a quibble, or one of many indications that he does not recognise the point at issue. I am speaking, as the sentence shows,[1] of scientific knowledge — knowledge which can be obtained by our own reason and observation alone — and no one with Professor Huxley's learning is justified in being ignorant that it is not upon such knowledge, but upon supernatural revelation, that Christian belief rests.

[1] And as Professor Huxley knew, for he expressly states it in the following passage, from which I am quoting in the text :—

"Let us calmly and dispassionately consider Dr Wace's appreciation of Agnosticism. The Agnostic, according to his view, is a person who says he has no means of attaining a scientific knowledge of the unseen world or of the future ; by which somewhat loose phraseology Dr Wace presumably means the theological unseen world and future. I cannot think this description happy either in form or substance, but for the present it may pass. Dr Wace continues, that is not 'his difference from Christians.' Are there, then, any Christians who say that they know nothing about the unseen world and the future? I was ignorant of the fact, but I am ready to accept it on the authority of a professional theologian, and I proceed to Dr Wace's next proposition.

"The real state of the case, then, is that the Agnostic 'does not believe the authority' on which 'these things' are stated, which authority is Jesus Christ. He is simply an old-fashioned 'infidel' who is afraid to own to his right name. As 'Presbyter is priest writ large,' so is 'agnostic' the mere Greek equivalent for the Latin 'infidel.' There is an attractive simplicity about this solution of the problem ; and it has that advantage of being somewhat offensive to the persons attacked, which is so dear to the less refined sort of controversialist."—Science and Christian Tradition, p. 211.

However, as he goes on to say, my view of "the real state of the case is that the Agnostic 'does not believe the authority' on which 'these things' are stated, which authority is Jesus Christ. He is simply an old-fashioned 'infidel' who is afraid to own to his right name." The argument has nothing to do with his motive, whether it is being afraid or not. It only concerns the fact that that by which he is distinctively separated from the Christian is that he does not believe the assurances of Jesus Christ.

Professor Huxley thinks there is "an attractive simplicity about this solution of the problem" —he means, of course, this statement of the case—"and it has that advantage of being somewhat offensive to the persons attacked, which is so dear to the less refined sort of controversialist." I think Professor Huxley must have forgotten himself and his own feelings in this observation. There can be no question, of course, of his belonging himself to the more refined sort of controversialists; but he has a characteristic fancy for solutions of problems, or statements of cases, which have the "advantage of being somewhat offensive to the persons attacked." Without taking this particular phrase into account, it certainly has "the advantage of

being offensive to the persons attacked" that Professor Huxley should speak in this article[1] of "the pestilent doctrine on which all the Churches have insisted, that honest disbelief" —the word "honest" is not a misquotation— "honest disbelief in their more or less astonishing creeds is a moral offence, indeed a sin of the deepest dye, deserving and involving the same future retribution as murder or robbery," or that he should say, "Trip in morals or in doctrine (especially in doctrine), without due repentance or retractation, or fail to get properly baptised before you die, and a *plébiscite* of the Christians of Europe, if they were true to their creeds, would affirm your everlasting damnation by an immense majority." We have fortunately nothing to do with *plébiscites* in this argument; and as statements of authoritative Christian teaching, the least that can be said of these allegations is that they are offensive exaggerations. It had "the advantage," again, of being "offensive to the persons attacked," when Professor Huxley, in an article in the 'Nineteenth Century' on "Science and the Bishops," in November 1887,[2] said that "scientific ethics can and

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, pp. 240, 242.

[2] Republished in 'Science and Christian Tradition' under the title of "An Episcopal Trilogy;" see p. 141.

does declare that the profession of belief" in such narratives as that of the devils entering a herd of swine, or of the fig-tree that was blasted for bearing no figs, upon the evidence on which multitudes of Christians believe it, "is immoral"; and the observation which follows, that "theological apologists . . . would do well to consider the fact that, in the matter of intellectual veracity, science is already a long way ahead of the Churches," has the same "advantage." I repeat that I cannot but treat Professor Huxley as an example of the more refined sort of controversialist; it must be supposed, therefore, that when he speaks of observations or insinuations which are somewhat offensive to the "persons attacked" being dear to the other sort of controversialists, he is unconscious of his own methods of controversy—or, shall I say, his own temptations?

But I desire as far as possible to avoid any rivalry with Professor Huxley in these refinements—more or less—of controversy; and am, in fact, forced by pressure both of space and of time to keep as rigidly as possible to the points directly at issue. He proceeds to restate the case as follows[1]: "The Agnostic says, 'I cannot

[1] "The Agnostic says, 'I cannot find good evidence that so and so is true.' 'Ah,' says his adversary, seizing his opportunity,

find good evidence that so and so is true.' 'Ah,' says his adversary, seizing his opportunity, 'then you declare that Jesus Christ was untruthful, for He said so and so'—a very telling method of rousing prejudice." Now, that superior scientific veracity to which, as we have seen, Professor Huxley lays claim, should have prevented his putting such vulgar words into my mouth. There is not a word in my paper to charge Agnostics with declaring that Jesus Christ was "untruthful." I believe it impossible in these days for any man who claims attention—I might say, for any man—to declare our Lord untruthful. What I said, and what I repeat, is that the position of an Agnostic involves the conclusion that Jesus Christ was under an "illusion" in respect to the deepest beliefs of His life and teaching. The words of my paper are: "An Agnosticism which knows nothing of the relation

'then you declare that Jesus Christ was untruthful, for He said so and so;' a very telling method of rousing prejudice. But suppose that the value of the evidence as to what Jesus may have said and done, and as to the exact nature and scope of his authority, is just that which the Agnostic finds it most difficult to determine? If I venture to doubt that the Duke of Wellington gave the command 'Up, Guards, and at 'em!' at Waterloo, I do not think that even Dr Wace would accuse me of disbelieving the Duke. Yet it would be just as reasonable to do this as to accuse any one of denying what Jesus said before the preliminary question as to what He did say is settled."—Science and Christian Tradition, p. 212.

of man to God must not only refuse belief to our Lord's most undoubted teaching, but must deny the reality of the spiritual convictions in which He lived and died." The point is this—that there can, at least, be no reasonable doubt that Jesus Christ lived, and taught, and died, in the belief of certain great principles, respecting the existence of God, our relation to God, and His own relation to us, which an Agnostic says are beyond the possibilities of human knowledge; and of course an Agnostic regards Jesus Christ as a man. If so, he must necessarily regard Jesus Christ as mistaken, since the notion of His being untruthful is a supposition which I could not conceive being suggested. The question I have put is not, as Professor Huxley represents, what is the most unpleasant alternative to belief in the primary truths of the Christian religion, but what is the least unpleasant; and all I have maintained is that the least unpleasant alternative necessarily involved is, that Jesus Christ was under an illusion in His most vital convictions.

I content myself with thus rectifying the state of the case, without making the comments which I think would be justified on such a crude misrepresentation of my argument. But Professor Huxley goes on to observe that "the value of the evidence as to what Jesus may have said

and done, and as to the exact nature and scope of His authority, is just that which the Agnostic finds it most difficult to determine." Undoubtedly, that is a primary question; but who would suppose from Professor Huxley's statement of the case that the argument of the paper he is attacking proceeded to deal with this very point, and that he has totally ignored the chief consideration it alleged? Almost immediately after the words Professor Huxley has quoted, the following passage occurs, which I must needs repeat, as containing the central point of the argument: "It may be asked how far we can rely on the accounts we possess of our Lord's teaching on these subjects. Now, it is unnecessary for the general argument before us to enter on those questions respecting the authenticity of the Gospel narratives, which ought to be regarded as settled by M. Renan's practical surrender of the adverse case. *Apart from all disputed points of criticism, no one practically doubts that our Lord lived, and that He died on the cross, in the most intense sense of filial relation to His Father in heaven, and that He bore testimony to that Father's providence, love, and grace towards mankind. The Lord's Prayer affords sufficient evidence upon these points. If the Sermon on the Mount alone*

be added, the whole unseen world, of which the Agnostic refuses to know anything, stands unveiled before us. There you see revealed the Divine Father and Creator of all things, in personal relation to His creatures, hearing their prayers, witnessing their actions, caring for them and rewarding them. There you hear of a future judgment administered by Christ Himself, and of a heaven to be hereafter revealed, in which those who live as the children of that Father, and who suffer in the cause and for the sake of Christ Himself, will be abundantly rewarded. If Jesus Christ preached that sermon, made those promises, and taught that prayer, then any one who says that we know nothing of God, or of a future life, or of an unseen world, says that he does not believe Jesus Christ."

Professor Huxley has not one word to say upon this argument, though the whole case is involved in it. Let us take as an example the illustration he proceeds to give. "If," he says, "I venture to doubt that the Duke of Wellington gave the command, 'Up, Guards, and at 'em!' at Waterloo, I do not think that even Dr Wace would accuse me of disbelieving the Duke." Certainly not. But if Professor Huxley were to maintain that the pursuit of glory was the true motive of the

soldier, and that it was an illusion to suppose that simple devotion to duty could be the supreme guide of military life, I should certainly charge him with contradicting the Duke's teaching and disregarding his authority and example. A hundred stories like that of "Up, Guards, and at 'em!" might be doubted, or positively disproved, and it would still remain a fact beyond all reasonable doubt that the Duke of Wellington was essentially characterised by the sternest and most devoted sense of duty, and that he had inculcated duty as the very watchword of a soldier; and even Professor Huxley would not suggest that Lord Tennyson's ode, which has embodied this characteristic in immortal verse, was an unfounded poetical romance.

The main question at issue, in a word, is one which Professor Huxley has chosen to leave entirely on one side—whether, namely, allowing for the utmost uncertainty entertained on other points by the criticism to which he appeals, there is any reasonable doubt that the Lord's Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount afford a true account of our Lord's essential belief and cardinal teaching. If they do—then I am not now contending that they involve the whole of the Christian creed; I am not arguing, as Professor Huxley seems to suppose, that he ought for that reason

alone to be a Christian—I simply represent that, as an Agnostic, he must regard those beliefs and that teaching as mistaken, as the result of an illusion, to say the least. I am not going, therefore, to follow Professor Huxley's example, and go down a steep place with the Gadarene swine into a sea of uncertainties and possibilities, and stake the whole case of Christian belief as against Agnosticism upon one of the most difficult and mysterious narratives in the New Testament. I will state my position on that question presently. But I am first and chiefly concerned to point out that Professor Huxley has skilfully evaded the very point and edge of the argument he had to meet. Let him raise what difficulties he pleases, with the help of his favourite critics, about the Gadarene swine, or even about all the stories of demoniacs. He will find that his critics — and even critics more rationalistic than they—fail him when it comes to the Lord's Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount, and, I will add, the story of the Passion. He will find, or rather he must have found, that the very critics he relies upon recognise that in the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer, allowing for variations in form and order, the substance of our Lord's essential teaching is preserved. On a point which, until Professor Hux-

ley shows cause to the contrary, can hardly want argument, the judgment of the most recent of his witnesses may suffice—Professor Reuss of Strasburg. In Professor Huxley's article on the "Evolution of Theology" in the 'Fortnightly Review' for March 1886, he says:[1] "As Reuss appears to me to be one of the most learned, acute, and fair-minded of those whose works I have studied, I have made most use of the commentary and dissertations in his splendid French edition of the Bible." What, then, is the opinion of the critic for whom Professor Huxley has this regard? In the volume of his work which treats of the first three Gospels, Reuss says, at pp. 191, 192,[2] "If anywhere the tradition which has preserved to us the reminiscences of the life of Jesus upon earth carries with it certainty and the evidence of its fidelity, it is here;" and again,[3] "In short, it must be acknowledged that the redactor, in thus con-

[1] Reprinted in 'Science and Hebrew Tradition,' p. 294, note.

[2] "Si quelque part la tradition, qui nous a conservé les souvenirs du passage de Jésus sur la terre, porte avec elle la certitude, la preuve de sa fidélité, c'est bien ici."

[3] "En somme, cependant, il convient de reconnaître que le rédacteur, en concentrant ainsi la substance de l'enseignement moral du Seigneur, a rendu un vrai service à l'étude religieuse de cette partie de la tradition, et les réserves que la critique historique est en droit de faire sur la forme n'amoindriront en aucune façon cet avantage."

centrating the substance of the moral teaching of the Lord, has rendered a real service to the religious study of this portion of the tradition, and the reserves which historical criticism has a right to make with respect to the form will in no way diminish this advantage." It will be observed that Professor Reuss thinks, as many good critics have thought, that the Sermon on the Mount combines various distinct utterances of our Lord, but he none the less recognises that it embodies an unquestionable account of the substance of our Lord's teaching.

But it is surely superfluous to argue either this particular point, or the main conclusion which I have founded on it. Can there be any doubt whatever, in the mind of any reasonable man, that Jesus Christ had beliefs respecting God for which an Agnostic alleges there is no sufficient ground? We know something at all events of what His disciples taught; we have authentic original documents, unquestioned by any of Professor Huxley's authorities, as to what St Paul taught and believed, and of what he taught and believed respecting his Master's teaching; and the central point of this teaching is a direct assertion of knowledge and revelation as against the very Agnosticism from which Professor Huxley manufactured that designa-

tion. "As I passed by," said St Paul at Athens, "I found an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly [or in agnosticism] worship, Him declare I unto you."[1] An Agnostic withholds his assent from this primary article of the Christian creed; and though Professor Huxley, in spite of the lack of information he alleges respecting early Christian teaching, knows enough on the subject to have a firm belief[2] "that the Nazarenes, say, of the year 40," headed by James, would have thought worthy of stoning any one who propounded the Nicene Creed to them, he will hardly contend that they denied that article, or doubted that Jesus Christ believed it. Let us again listen to the authority to whom Professor Huxley himself refers. Reuss says at p. 4 of the work already quoted:[3]—

"Historical literature in the primitive Church

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[1] Acts xvii. 23. [2] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 233.

[3] "La littérature historique, dans l'Église primitive, se rattache de la manière la plus immédiate aux souvenirs recueillis par les Apôtres et leurs amis aussitôt après leur séparation d'avec leur maître. Le besoin d'un pareil retour vers le passé naissait naturellement de la profonde impression qu'avait faite sur eux l'enseignement, et plus encore l'individualité de Jésus elle-même, et sur laquelle se fondaient et leurs espérances pour l'avenir et leurs convictions, naguère assez vagues encore, concernant le mystère qui entourait sa personne. . . . C'est dans ces faits,

attaches itself in the most immediate manner to the reminiscences collected by the apostles and their friends directly after their separation from their Master. The need of such a return to the past arose naturally from the profound impression which had been made upon them by the teaching, and still more by the individuality itself of Jesus, and on which were founded both their hopes for the future and their convictions, but lately vague enough, concerning the mystery which surrounded his person. . . . It is in these facts, in this continuity of a tradition which must go back to the very morrow of the tragic scene of Golgotha, that we have a strong guarantee for its authenticity. . . . We have direct historical proof that the thread of tradition was not interrupted. Not only does one of our evangelists furnish this proof in formal terms (Luke i. 2), but in many other places besides we perceive the idea, or the point of view, that all which the apostles know, think, and teach, is at bottom and essentially a reminiscence, a reflection of what they have seen and learnt at another time, a reproduction of lessons and impressions received."

Now, let it be allowed for argument's sake that the belief and teaching of the apostles are

dans cette continuité d'une tradition qui doit remonter jusqu'au lendemain même le la scène tragique de Golgotha, que nous trouvons une puissante garantie de son authenticité. . . . Nous avons la preuve historique et directe qu'il ne l'a pas été (interrompu). Non seulement l'un de nos évangélistes la fournit en termes formels (Luke i. 2, &c.), en maint autre endroit encore nous voyons percer l'idée ou le point de vue, que tout ce que les Apôtres savent, pensent et enseignent, est au fond et essentiellement un souvenir, un reflet de ce qu'ils ont vu et appris autrefois, une reproduction des leçons et des impressions reçues.

distinct from those of subsequent Christianity, yet it is surely a mere paradox to maintain that they did not assert, as taught by their Master, truths which an Agnostic denies. They certainly spoke, as Paul did, of the love of God; they certainly spoke, as Paul did, of Jesus having been raised from the dead by God the Father (Gal. i. 1); they certainly spoke, as Paul did, of Jesus Christ returning to judge the world; they certainly spoke, as Paul did, of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 31). That they could have done this without Jesus Christ having taught God's love, or having said that God was His Father, or having declared that He would judge the world, is a supposition which will certainly be regarded by an overwhelming majority of reasonable men as a mere paradox; and I cannot conceive, until he says so, that Professor Huxley would maintain it. But if so, then all Professor Huxley's argumentation about the Gadarene swine is mere irrelevance to the argument he undertakes to answer. The Gospels might be obliterated as evidence to-morrow, and it would remain indisputable that Jesus Christ taught certain truths respecting God, and man's relation to God, from which an Agnostic withholds his assent. If so, he does not believe Jesus Christ's teaching; he

is so far an unbeliever, and "unbeliever," Dr Johnson says, is an equivalent of "infidel."

This consideration will indicate another irrelevance in Professor Huxley's argument. He asks for a definition of what a Christian is, before he will allow that he can be justly called an infidel. But without being able to give an accurate definition of a crayfish, which perhaps only Professor Huxley could do, I may be very well able to say that some creatures are not crayfish; and it is not necessary to frame a definition of a Christian in order to say confidently that a person who does not believe the broad and unquestionable elements of Christ's teachings and convictions is not a Christian. "Infidel" or "unbeliever" is, of course, as Professor Huxley says, a relative and not a positive term. He makes a great deal of play out of what he seems to suppose will be a very painful and surprising consideration to myself, that to a Mahommedan I am an infidel. Of course I am; and I should never expect a Mahommedan, if he were called upon, as I was, to argue before an assembly of his own fellow-believers, to call me anything else. Professor Huxley is good enough to imagine me in his company on a visit to the Hazar Mosque at Cairo. When he entered that mosque without due credentials,

he suspects that, had he understood Arabic, "dog of an infidel" would have been by no means the most "unpleasant" of the epithets showered upon him before he could explain and apologise for the mistake.[1] If, he says, "I had had the pleasure of Dr Wace's company on that occasion, the undiscriminative followers of the Prophet would, I am afraid, have made no difference between us; not even if they had known that he was the head of an orthodox Christian seminary." Probably not; and I will add that I should have felt very little confidence in any attempts which Professor Huxley might have made, in the style of his present article, to protect me, by repudiating for himself the unpleasant epithets which he deprecates. It would, I suspect, have been of very little avail to attempt a subtle explanation, to one of the learned *mollahs* of whom he speaks, that he really did not mean to deny that there was one God, but only that he did not know anything on the subject, and that he desired to avoid expressing any opinion respecting the claims of Mahomet. It would be plain to the learned *mollah* that Professor Huxley did not believe either of the articles of the Mahommedan creed; in other words, that, for all his fine distinctions,

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 234.

he was at bottom a downright infidel, such as I confessed myself, and that there was an end of the matter. There is no fair way of avoiding the plain matter of fact in either case. A Mahommedan believes and asserts that there is no God but God, and that Mahomet is the Prophet of God. I don't believe Mahomet. In the plain, blunt, sensible phrase people used to use on such subjects, I believe he was a false prophet, and I am a downright infidel about him. The Christian creed might almost be summed up in the assertion that there is one, and but one God, and that Jesus Christ is His Prophet; and whoever denies that creed says that he does not believe Jesus Christ, by whom it was undoubtedly asserted. It is better to look facts in the face, especially from a scientific point of view. Whether Professor Huxley is justified in his denial of that creed is a further question, which demands separate consideration, but which was not, and is not now, at issue. All I say is that his position involves that disbelief or infidelity, and that this is a responsibility which must be faced by agnosticism.

But I am forced to conclude that Professor Huxley cannot have taken the pains to understand the point I raised, not only from the irrelevance of his argument on these considerations,

but from a misquotation which the superior accuracy of a man of science ought to have rendered impossible. Twice over in the article[1] he quotes me as saying that "it is, and it ought to be, an unpleasant thing for a man to have to say plainly that he does not believe in Jesus Christ." As he winds up his attack upon my paper by bringing against this statement his rather favourite charge of "immorality"—and even "most profound immorality"[2]—he was the more bound to accuracy in his quotation of my words. But neither in the official report of the Congress to which he refers, nor in any report that I have seen, is this the statement attributed to me. What I said, and what I meant to say, was that it ought to be an unpleasant thing for a man to have to say plainly "that he does not believe Jesus Christ." By inserting the little word "in," Professor Huxley has, by an unconscious ingenuity, shifted the import of the statement. He goes on[3] to denounce "the pestilent doctrine on which all the Churches have insisted, that honest disbelief in their more or less astonishing creeds

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, pp. 210, 240.

[2] Ibid., p. 240. "That 'it ought to be' unpleasant for any man to say anything which he sincerely, and after due deliberation, believes, is to my mind a proposition of the most profoundly immoral character."

[3] Ibid., p. 240.

is a moral offence, indeed a sin of the deepest dye." His interpretation exhibits, in fact, the idea in his own mind, which he has doubtless conveyed to his readers, of my having said it ought to be unpleasant to a man to have to say that he does not believe in the Christian creed. I certainly think it ought, for reasons I will mention; but that is not what I said. I spoke, deliberately, not of the Christian creed as a whole, but of Jesus Christ as a person, and regarded as a witness to certain primary truths which an Agnostic will not acknowledge. It was a personal consideration to which I appealed, and not a dogmatic one; and I am sorry, for that reason, that Professor Huxley will not allow me to leave it in the reserve with which I hoped it had been sufficiently indicated.

I said that "no criticism worth mentioning doubts the story of the Passion; and that story involves the most solemn attestation, again and again, of truths of which an Agnostic coolly says he knows nothing. An Agnosticism which knows nothing of the relation of man to God must not only refuse belief to our Lord's most undoubted teaching, but must deny the reality of the spiritual convictions in which He lived and died. It must declare that His most intimate, most intense beliefs, and His dying

aspirations, were an illusion. Is that supposition tolerable?" I do not think this deserves to be called "a proposition of the most profoundly immoral character." I think it ought to be unpleasant, and I am sure it always will be unpleasant, for a man to listen to the Saviour on the cross uttering such words as "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," and to say that they are not to be trusted as revealing a real relation between the Saviour and God. In spite of all doubts as to the accuracy of the Gospels, Jesus Christ—I trust I may be forgiven, under the stress of controversy, for mentioning His sacred name in this too familiar manner—is a tender and sacred Figure to all thoughtful minds, and it is, it ought to be, and it always will be, a very painful thing, to say that He lived and died under a mistake in respect to the words which were first and last on His lips. I think, as I have admitted, that it should be unpleasant for a man who has as much appreciation of Christianity, and of its work in the world, as Professor Huxley sometimes shows, to have to say that its belief was founded on no objective reality. The unpleasantness, indeed, of denying one system of thought may be balanced by the pleasantness, as Professor Huxley suggests, of asserting another and a better one. But

nothing, to all time, can do away with the unpleasantness, not only of repudiating sympathy with the most sacred figure of humanity in His deepest beliefs and feelings, but of pronouncing Him under an illusion in His last agony. If that be the truth, let it by all means be said; but if we are to talk of "immorality" in such matters, I think there must be a lack of moral sensibility in any man who could say it without pain.

The plain fact is that this misquotation would have been as impossible as a good deal else of Professor Huxley's argument, had he, in any degree, appreciated the real strength of the hold which Christianity has over men's hearts and minds. The strength of the Christian Church, in spite of its faults, errors, and omissions, is not in its creed, but in its Lord and Master. In spite of all the critics, the Gospels have conveyed to the minds of millions of men a living image of Christ. They see Him there; they hear His voice; they listen, and they believe Him. It is not so much that they accept certain doctrines as taught by Him, as that they accept Him, Himself, as their Lord and their God. The sacred fire of trust in Him descended upon the Apostles, and has from them been handed on from generation to generation. It is with that living personal Figure that Agnosticism has to

deal; and as long as the Gospels practically produce the effect of making that Figure a reality to human hearts, so long will the Christian faith, and the Christian Church, in their main characteristics, be vital and permanent forces in the world. Professor Huxley tells us, in a melancholy passage,[1] that he cannot define "the grand figure of Jesus." Who shall dare to "define" it? But saints have both written and lived an *imitatio Christi*, and men and women can feel and know what they cannot define. Professor Huxley, it would seem, would have us wait coolly until we had solved all critical difficulties before acting on such a belief. "Because," he says,[2] "we are often obliged, by the pressure of events, to act on very bad evidence, it does not follow that it is proper to act on such evidence when the pressure is absent." Certainly not; but it is strange ignorance of human nature for Professor Huxley to imagine that there is no "pressure" in this matter. It was a voice which understood the human heart better which said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and the attraction of that voice outweighs many a critical difficulty, under the pressure of the burdens and the sins of life.

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 229. [2] Ibid., p. 243.

Professor Huxley, indeed, admits, in one sentence of his article, the force of this influence on individuals.

"If," he says,[1] "a man can find a friend, the hypostasis of all his hopes, the mirror of his ethical ideal, in the Jesus of any, or all, of the Gospels, let him live by faith in that ideal. Who shall or can forbid him? But let him not delude himself with the notion that his faith is evidence of the objective reality of that in which he trusts. Such evidence is to be obtained only by the use of the methods of science, as applied to history and to literature, and it amounts at present to very little."

Well, a single man's belief in an ideal may be very little evidence of its objective reality. But the conviction of millions of men, generation after generation, of the veracity of the four evangelical witnesses, and of the human and divine reality of the Figure they describe, has at least something of the weight of the verdict of a jury. *Securus judicat orbis terrarum.* Practically the Figure of Christ lives. The Gospels have created it; and it subsists as a personal fact in life, alike among believers and unbelievers. Professor Huxley himself, in spite of all his scepticism, appears to have his own type of this character. The apologue of the woman taken in adultery, he says,[2] "if internal evidence were an

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 244. [2] Ibid., p. 223.

infallible guide, might well be affirmed to be a typical example of the teachings of Jesus." Internal evidence may not be an infallible guide; but it certainly carries great weight, and no one has relied more upon it in these questions than the critics whom Professor Huxley quotes.

But as I should be sorry to imitate Professor Huxley, on so momentous a subject, by evading the arguments and facts he alleges, I will consider the question of external evidence on which he dwells. I must repeat that the argument of my paper is independent of this controversy. The fact that our Lord taught and believed what Agnostics ignore is not dependent on the criticism of the four Gospels. In addition to the general evidence to which I have alluded, there is a further consideration which Professor Huxley feels it necessary to mention, but which he evades by an extraordinary inconsequence. He alleges that the story of the Gadarene swine involves fabulous matter, and that this discredits the trustworthiness of the whole Gospel record. But he says [1]:—

"At this point a very obvious objection arises, and deserves full and candid consideration. It may be said that critical scepticism carried to the length suggested is historical pyrrhonism; that if we are to altogether discredit an ancient or a modern historian be-

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 224.

cause he has assumed fabulous matter to be true, it will be as well to give up paying any attention to history. . . . Of course," he acknowledges, "this is perfectly true. I am afraid there is no man alive whose witness could be accepted, if the condition precedent were proof that he had never invented and promulgated a myth."

The question, then, which Professor Huxley himself raises, and which he had to answer, was this, Why is the general evidence of the Gospels, on the main facts of our Lord's life and teaching, to be discredited, even if it be true that they have invented or promulgated a myth about the Gadarene swine? What is his answer to that simple and broad question? Strange to say, absolutely none at all! He leaves this vital question without any answer, and goes back to the Gadarene swine. The question he raises is whether the supposed incredibility of the story of the Gadarene swine involves the general untrustworthiness of the story of the Gospels; and his conclusion is that it involves the incredibility of the story of the Gadarene swine. A more complete evasion of his own question it would be difficult to imagine. As Professor Huxley almost challenges me to state what I think of that story, I have only to say that I fully believe it, and, moreover, that Professor Huxley, in this very article, has removed the only consideration which

would have been a serious obstacle to my belief. If he were prepared to say, on his high scientific authority, that the narrative involves a contradiction of established scientific truth, I could not but defer to such a decision, and I might be driven to consider those possibilities of interpolation in the narrative, which Professor Huxley is good enough to suggest to all who feel the improbability of the story too much for them. But Professor Huxley expressly says[1]:—

"I admit I have no *a priori* objection to offer. . . . For anything I can absolutely prove to the contrary, there may be spiritual things capable of the same transmigration, with like effects. Moreover, I am bound to add that perfectly truthful persons, for whom I have the greatest respect, believe in stories about spirits at the present day, quite as improbable as that we are considering. So I declare, as plainly as I can, that I am unable to show cause why these transferable devils should not exist."

Very well, then, as the highest science of the day is unable to show cause against the possibility of the narrative, and as I regard the Gospels as containing the evidence of trustworthy persons who were contemporary with the events narrated, and as their general veracity carries to my mind the greatest possible weight, I accept their statement in this, as in other instances. Professor

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 226.

Huxley ventures[1] "to doubt whether, at this present moment, any Protestant theologian, who has a reputation to lose, will say that he believes the Gadarene story." He will judge whether I fall under his description; but I repeat that I believe it, and that he has removed the only objection to my believing it.

However, to turn finally to the important fact of external evidence. Professor Huxley reiterates, again and again, that the verdict of scientific criticism is decisive against the supposition that we possess in the four Gospels the authentic and contemporary evidence of known writers. He repeats,[2] "without the slightest fear of refutation, that the four Gospels, as they have come to us, are the work of unknown writers." In particular, he challenges my allegation of "M. Renan's practical surrender of the adverse case"; and he adds the following observations,[3] to which I beg the reader's particular attention:—

"I thought," he says, "I knew M. Renan's works pretty well, but I have contrived to miss this 'practical' (I wish Dr Wace had defined the scope of that useful adjective) surrender. However, as Dr Wace can find no difficulty in pointing out the passage of M. Renan's writings by which he feels justified in making

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 220.
[2] Ibid., p. 222, note.
[3] Ibid., p. 213, note.

his statement, I shall wait for further enlightenment, contenting myself, for the present, with remarking that if M. Renan were to retract and do penance in Notre Dame to-morrow for any contributions to Biblical criticism that may be specially his property, the main results of that criticism, as they are set forth in the works of Strauss, Baur, Reuss, and Volkmar, for example, would not be sensibly affected."

Let me begin, then, by enlightening Professor Huxley about M. Renan's surrender. I have the less difficulty in doing so as the passages he has contrived to miss have been collected by me already in a little tract on the 'Authenticity of the Gospels,'[1] and in some lectures on the 'Gospel and its Witnesses';[2] and I shall take the liberty, for convenience' sake, of repeating some of the observations there made.

I beg first to refer to the preface to M. Renan's 'Vie de Jésus.'[3] There M. Renan says:—

"As to Luke, doubt is scarcely possible. The Gospel of St Luke is a regular composition, founded upon earlier documents. It is the work of an author who chooses, curtails, combines. The author of this Gospel is certainly the same as the author of the Acts of the Apostles. Now, the author of the Acts seems to be a companion of St Paul — a character which accords completely with St Luke. I know that more

[1] Religious Tract Society. [2] John Murray, 1884.
[3] Fifteenth edition, p. xlix.

than one objection may be opposed to this reasoning; but one thing at all events is beyond doubt—namely, that the author of the third Gospel and of the Acts is a man who belonged to the second apostolic generation, and this suffices for our purpose. The date of this Gospel, moreover, may be determined with sufficient precision by considerations drawn from the book itself. The twenty-first chapter of St Luke, which is inseparable from the rest of the work, was certainly written after the siege of Jerusalem, but not long after. We are, therefore, here on solid ground, for we are dealing with a work proceeding entirely from the same hand, and possessing the most complete unity."

It may be important to observe that this admission has been supported by M. Renan's further investigations, as expressed in his subsequent volume on 'The Apostles.' In the preface to that volume he discusses fully the nature and value of the narrative contained in the Acts of the Apostles, and he pronounces the following decided opinions as to the authorship of that book, and its connection with the Gospel of St Luke (p. x *sq.*) :—

"One point which is beyond question is that the Acts are by the same author as the third Gospel, and are a continuation of that Gospel. One need not stop to prove this proposition, which has never been seriously contested. The prefaces at the commencement of each work, the dedication of each to Theophilus, the perfect resemblance of style and of ideas, furnish on this point abundant demonstrations.

"A second proposition, which has not the same certainty, but which may, however, be regarded as extremely probable, is that the author of the Acts is a disciple of Paul, who accompanied him for a considerable part of his travels."

At a first glance, M. Renan observes, this proposition appears indubitable, from the fact that the author, on so many occasions, uses the pronoun "we," indicating that on those occasions he was one of the apostolic band by whom St Paul was accompanied. "One may even be astonished that a proposition apparently so evident should have found persons to contest it." He notices, however, the difficulties which have been raised on the point, and then proceeds as follows (p. xiv) :—

"Must we be checked by these objections? I think not; and I persist in believing that the person who finally prepared the Acts is really the disciple of Paul, who says 'we' in the last chapters. All difficulties, however insoluble they may appear, ought to be, if not dismissed, at least held in suspense by an argument so decisive as that which results from the use of this word 'we.'"

He then observes that MSS. and tradition combine in assigning the third Gospel to a certain Luke, and that it is scarcely conceivable that a name, in other respects obscure, should have been attributed to so important a work for

any other reason than that it was the name of the real author. Luke, he says, had no place in tradition, in legend, or in history, when these two treatises were ascribed to him. M. Renan concludes in the following words: "We think, therefore, that the author of the third Gospel and of the Acts is in all reality Luke, the disciple of Paul."

Now, let the import of these expressions of opinion be duly weighed. Of course M. Renan's judgments are not to be regarded as affording in themselves any adequate basis for our acceptance of the authenticity of the chief books of the New Testament. The Acts of the Apostles and the four Gospels bear on their face certain positive claims, on the faith of which they have been accepted in all ages of the Church; and they do not rest, in the first instance, on the authority of any modern critic. But though M. Renan would be a very unsatisfactory witness to rely upon for the purpose of positive testimony to the Gospels, his estimates of the value of modern critical objections to those sacred books have all the weight of the admissions of a hostile witness. No one doubts his familiarity with the whole range of the criticism represented by such names as Strauss and Baur, and no one questions his disposition to give full weight to every objection

which that criticism can urge. Even without assuming that he is prejudiced on either one side or the other, it will be admitted on all hands that he is more favourably disposed than otherwise to such criticism as Professor Huxley relies on. When, therefore, with this full knowledge of the literature of the subject, such a writer comes to the conclusion that the criticism in question has entirely failed to make good its case on a point like that of the authorship of St Luke's Gospel, we are at least justified in concluding that critical objections do not possess the weight which unbelievers or sceptics are wont to assign to them. M. Renan, in a word, is no adequate witness to the Gospels; but he is a very significant witness as to the value of modern critical objections to them.

Let us pass to the two other so-called "synoptical" Gospels. With respect to St Matthew, M. Renan says in the same preface ('Vie de Jésus,' p. lxxxi) :—

"To sum up, I admit the four canonical Gospels as serious documents. All go back to the age which followed the death of Jesus; but their historical value is very diverse. St Matthew evidently deserves peculiar confidence for the discourses. Here are 'the oracles,' the very notes taken while the memory of the instruction of Jesus was living and definite. A kind of flashing brightness at once sweet and terrible, a divine force,

if I may so say, underlines these words, detaches them from the context, and renders them easily recognisable by the critic."

In respect again to St Mark, he says (p. lxxxii):—

"The Gospel of St Mark is the one of the three Synoptics which has remained the most ancient, the most original, and to which the least of later additions have been made. The details of fact possess in St Mark a definiteness which we seek in vain in the other evangelists. He is fond of reporting certain sayings of our Lord in Syro-Chaldaic. He is full of minute observations, proceeding, beyond doubt, from an eye-witness. There is nothing to conflict with the supposition that this eye-witness, who had evidently followed Jesus, who had loved Him and watched Him in close intimacy, and who had preserved a vivid image of Him, was the Apostle Peter himself, as Papias has it."

I call these admissions a "practical surrender" of the adverse case, as stated by critics like Strauss and Baur, who denied that we had in the Gospels contemporary evidence; and I do not think it necessary to define the adjective in order to please Professor Huxley's appetite for definitions. At the very least, it is a direct contradiction of Professor Huxley's statement (p. 222) that we know "absolutely nothing" of "the originator or originators" of the narratives in the first three Gospels; and it is an equally

direct contradiction of the assumption, on which his main reply to my paper is based, that we have no trustworthy evidence of what our Lord taught and believed.[1]

But Professor Huxley seems to have been apprehensive that M. Renan would fail him, for he proceeds, in the passage I have quoted, to throw him over, and to take refuge behind "the main results of Biblical criticism, as they are set forth

[1] Professor Huxley in a further rejoinder, reprinted in 'Science and Christian Tradition,' p. 355, charges me with unfairness for not mentioning that in 'Les Évangiles,' published one year after the edition of the 'Vie de Jésus' from which I was quoting, M. Renan uses some disparaging expressions respecting the historic value of the Gospels, and particularly of St Luke; saying, for instance, that "the historic value of the third Gospel is certainly less than that of the two first" ('Évangiles,' p. 283). But, as a matter of fairness, why did Professor Huxley omit to add the next sentence—"At the same time, a comparison between the Gospel of St Luke and the Acts of the Apostles leads to one remarkable fact, which proves (*qui prouve bien*) that the so-called Synoptic Gospels contain really an echo of the language of Jesus,"—the very point on which Professor Huxley says we cannot rely? As to M. Renan's successive volumes, it is well known that a characteristic feature of that writer was his variation of opinion on critical points. But he never withdrew the passages quoted by me from the 'Vie de Jésus'; and, as a matter of date, imprints of the 'Vie de Jésus,' with the quoted passages, were issued after 'Les Évangiles.' But these trivialities are independent of the practical point. Professor Huxley said that we know "absolutely nothing" of the authors of the Gospels. M. Renan says, at least, that we know a good deal. He allows that the Gospels contain traditions written down by contemporaries. He distrusts these contemporaries in some points; but he trusted them well enough to compose a 'Vie de Jésus' out of them.

in the works of Strauss, Baur, Reuss, and Volkmar, for example." It is scarcely comprehensible how a writer, who has acquaintance enough with this subject to venture on Professor Huxley's sweeping assertions, can have ventured to couple together those four names for such a purpose. "Strauss, Baur, Reuss, and Volkmar"! Why, they are absolutely destructive of one another! Baur rejected Strauss's theory and set up one of his own; while Reuss and Volkmar in their turn have each dealt fatal blows at Baur's. As to Strauss, I need not spend more time on him than to quote the sentence in which Baur himself puts him out of court on this particular controversy. He says,[1] "The chief peculiarity of Strauss's work is, that it is a criticism of the Gospel history without a criticism of the Gospels." Strauss, in fact, explained the miraculous stories in the Gospels by resolving them into myths, and it was of no importance to his theory how the documents originated. But Baur endeavoured, by a minute criticism of the Gospels themselves, to investigate the historical circumstances of their origin; and he maintained that they were *Tendenz-Schriften*, compiled in the second century, with polemical purposes. Volkmar, however, is in direct conflict with Baur on this point,

[1] Kritische Untersuchungen über die kanonischen Evangelien, 1847, p. 41.

and in the very work to which Professor Huxley refers,[1] he enumerates (p. 18) among "the written testimonies of the first century"—besides St Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans, and the Apocalypse of St John—"the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, according to John Mark of Jerusalem, written a few years after the destruction of Jerusalem, between the years 70 and 80 of our reckoning—about 75; probably, to be precise, about 73," and he proceeds to give a detailed account of it, "according to the oldest text, and particularly the Vatican text," as indispensable to his account of Jesus of Nazareth. He treats it as written (p. 174) either by John Mark of Jerusalem himself, or by a younger friend of his. Baur, therefore, having upset Strauss, Volkmar proceeds to upset Baur; and what does Reuss do? I quote again from that splendid French edition of the Bible on which Professor Huxley so much relies. On p. 88 of Reuss's Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels, he sums up "the results he believes to have been obtained by critical analysis" under thirteen heads; and the following are some of them:—

"2. Of the three Synoptic Gospels, one only, that which ecclesiastical tradition agrees in attributing to Luke, has reached us in its primitive form.

[1] Jesus Nazarenus und die erste christliche Zeit, 1882.

"3. Luke could draw his knowledge of the Gospel history partly from the information supplied to him by oral tradition; he was able, in Palestine itself, to receive direct communications from immediate witnesses. . . . We may think especially here of the history of the passion and the resurrection, and perhaps also of some other passages of which he is the sole narrator. . . .

"4. A book which an ancient and respectable testimony attributes to Mark, the disciple of Peter, was certainly used by Luke as the principal source of the portion of his Gospel between chap. iv. 31 and ix. 50, and between xviii. 15 and xxi. 38. . . .

"5. According to all probability, the book of Mark, consulted by Luke, comprised in its primitive form what we read in the present day from Mark i. 21 to xiii. 37."[1]

[1] As Professor Huxley, in a subsequent article ('Science and Christian Tradition,' p. 264), warns his readers "against any reliance upon Dr Wace's statements as to the results arrived at by modern criticism," I subjoin, at the end of this article, the whole text of the summary given by Reuss, in the passage above referred to, of the results at which he arrived. The reader will thus be able to judge with what justice so magisterial a sentence is pronounced. I presume that reliance may be placed on Reuss's own statement of Reuss's conclusions; and he appears to be Professor Huxley's favourite commentator. Thus, in the note on p. 294 of 'Science and Hebrew Tradition,' Professor Huxley says: "As Reuss appears to me to be one of the most learned, acute, and fair-minded of those whose works I have studied, I have made most use of the commentary and dissertations in his splendid French edition of the Bible." It is from that edition that my quotations are made. It has been objected that Reuss subsequently states that, in referring to the authors of the Gospels, in the above passage, by their accepted names, he is only "conforming provisionally to

It seems unnecessary, for the purpose of estimating the value of Professor Huxley's appeal to these critics, to quote any more. It appears from these statements of Reuss that if "the results of Biblical criticism," as represented by him, are to be trusted, we have the whole third Gospel in its primitive form, as it was written by "Luke"; and in this, as we have seen, Reuss is in entire agreement with Renan's judgment in the 'Vie de Jésus.' But besides this, a previous book, attributed by an ancient and respectable tradition to Mark, St Peter's disciple, was certainly in existence before Luke's Gospel, and

the general usage," and that it is a further question whether the "Mark" and "Luke" to whom the Gospels are assigned are the same persons as the Mark and Luke mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St Paul. He says, however, in respect to the name Mark, that "the doubts concerning the identity of the persons are not perhaps of very great weight" ('Hist. Evang.,' p. 99); and in respect to Luke, he expresses, in his introduction to the Acts of the Apostles, his opinion that the identification of the author with the Luke who was the friend of St Paul is one of the most reasonable hypotheses which have been made in reference to the problems of Apostolic literature. One may be reminded, by these subtleties, of the critic who thought that the Homeric poems were not produced by Homer, but by another person of the same name. But in any case the conclusion remains, that in respect to the second Gospel "there is an agreement" among modern critics "that the author must have been in a position to be very well informed" (p. 99); and in respect to the author of the third Gospel, as stated above, that he had the opportunity of obtaining information in Palestine itself from immediate witnesses.

was used by Luke; and in all probability this book was, in its primitive form, our present Gospel of St Mark, with the exception of a few verses at the beginning and the account of the Passion at the end.

Such are those "results of Biblical criticism" to which Professor Huxley has appealed; and we may fairly judge by these, not only of the value of his special contention in reply to my paper, but of the worth of the sweeping assertions he, and writers like him, are given to making about modern critical science. Professor Huxley says that we know "absolutely nothing" about the originators of the Gospel narratives, and he appeals to criticism in the persons of Volkmar and Reuss. Volkmar says that the second Gospel is really either by St Mark or by one of his friends, and was written about the year 75. Reuss says that the third Gospel, as we now have it, was written by a person who was able, in Palestine itself, to receive information from direct witnesses. Now, Professor Huxley is, of course, entitled to his own opinion; but he is not entitled to quote authorities in support of his opinion when they are in direct opposition to it. He asserts, "without the slightest fear of refutation, that the four Gospels, as they have come to us, are the

work of unknown writers." His arguments in defence of such a position will be listened to with respect; but let it be borne in mind that the opposite arguments he has got to meet are not only those of orthodox critics like myself, but those of Renan, of Volkmar, and of Reuss—I may add of Pfleiderer, well known in this country by his Hibbert Lectures, who, in his recent work on original Christianity,[1] attributes most positively the second Gospel in its present form to St Mark, and declares that there is no ground whatever for that supposition of an *Urmarcus*—that is, an original groundwork—from which Professor Huxley alleges that "at the present time there is no visible escape."

If I were such an authority on morality as Professor Huxley, I might perhaps use some un-

[1] 'Das Urchristenthum,' von Otto Pfleiderer: Berlin, 1887, p. 414: "As to the composition of this Gospel [St Mark's] nothing tells against, and everything tells for, the correctness of the ecclesiastical tradition which has from the first assigned it to the John Mark who is known to us from the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St Paul." Again, on p. 416: "It is further to be observed that in our canonical Gospel of St Mark we have before us the original work of the evangelist, leaving out of account detached interpolations, such as are to be found in all ancient literature. For the assumption of an *Urmarcus* (or original Mark) substantially different from the canonical book, there is no ground whatever. On the contrary, our Gospel of St Mark is a work from one fount, written in an individual style, and well arranged in accordance with an individual, a clear, and a lucid order."

pleasant language respecting this vague assumption of criticism being all on his side, when it, in fact, directly contradicts him; and his case is not the only one to which such strictures might be applied. In 'Robert Elsmere,' for example, there is some vapouring about the "great critical operation of the present century" having destroyed the historical basis of the Gospel narrative. As a matter of fact, as we have seen, the great critical operation has resulted, according to the testimony of the critics whom Professor Huxley himself selects, in establishing the fact that we possess contemporary records of our Lord's life from persons who were either eye-witnesses, or who were in direct communication with eye-witnesses on the very scene in which it was passed. Either Professor Huxley's own witnesses are not to be trusted, or Professor Huxley's allegations are rash and unfounded. Conclusions which are denied by Volkmar, denied by Renan, denied by Reuss, are not to be thrown at our heads with a superior air, as if they could not reasonably be doubted. The great result of the "critical operation of this century" has, in fact, been to prove that the contention with which it started in the persons of Strauss and Baur, that we have no contemporary records of Christ's life, is wholly untenable. It has not convinced

any of the living critics to whom Professor Huxley appeals; and if he, or any similar writer, still maintains such an assertion, let it be understood that he stands alone against the leading critics of Europe in the present day.

Perhaps I need say no more for the present in reply to Professor Huxley. I have, I think, shown that he has evaded my point; he has evaded his own points; he has misquoted my words; he has misrepresented the results of the very criticism to which he appeals; and he rests his case on assumptions which his own authorities repudiate. The questions he touches are very grave ones, not to be adequately treated in a Review article. But I should have supposed it a point of scientific morality to treat them, if they are to be treated, with accuracy of reference and strictness of argument.

Note.—Subjoined is the full text of M. Reuss's conclusions referred to in the above article ('Histoire Évangélique,' p. 88):—

"Arrivé au terme de notre analyse critique, il ne nous reste plus qu'à résumer en quelques mots les résultats que nous croyons avoir obtenus:

"1°. La plupart des systèmes imaginés autrefois pour expliquer les rapports d'origine et de dépendance de nos trois premiers évangiles ont manqué leur but, parcequ'ils ne prenaient en considération que les livres tels que nous les possédons aujourd'hui.

"2°. Des trois évangiles synoptiques, un seul, celui que la tradition ecclésiastique s'accorde a attribuer à Luc, nous est parvenu dans sa forme primitive.

" 3°. Luc a pu puiser sa connaissance de l'histoire évangélique, en partie dans les renseignements que lui fournissait la tradition orale ; il a pu, en Palestine même, recevoir des communications direct de témoins immédiats. Il est impossible de dire quelles parties ou quels éléments de son ouvrage sont puisés à cette source ; cependant nous pouvons songer ici de préférence à l'histoire de la passion et de la résurrection, peut-être aussi à quelques autres morceaux pour lesquels il est le seul narrateur, ou dans lesquels il se sépare des autres évangélistes—par exemple, chap. v. 1-11 ; vii. 1-17, 36-50 ; xix. 1-27.

" 4°. Un livre qu'un témoignage ancien et respectable attribue à Marc, disciple de Pierre, a positivement servi à Luc de source principale pour la partie comprise entre chap. iv. 31-ix. 50 et entre xviii. 15 et xxi. 38, sauf les exceptions mentionnés tout à l'heure.

" 5°. Selon toute probabilité, le livre de Marc, consulté par Luc, a compris dans sa forme primitive ce que nous lisons aujourd'hui Marc i. 21-xiii. 37. L'histoire de la passion qui forme les trois derniers chapitres de l'évangile dans sa forme actuelle, n'a pas passé sous les yeux de Luc. Il en est de même des récits compris entre chap. vi. 47 et viii. 26. Ces parties peuvent bien provenir de l'auteur même, mais dans ce cas celui-ci ne les aurait ajoutées qu'après que des exemplaires incomplets étaient déjà répandus dans le public.

" 6°. L'histoire de la passion, dans le second évangile, ou si l'on veut, ce livre lui-même dans sa forme plus complète, s'arretait au huitième verset du xvi^{e} chapitre.

" 7°. À côté du livre de Marc, et peut-être plus anciennement déjà, il en existait un autre écrit par Matthieu, l'un des douze Apôtres. Ce livre était un recueil de sentences ou maximes et autres enseignements de Jésus. D'après un ancien témoignage, ce recueil aurait existé d'abord en hébreu. Quoi qu'il en sort, les évangelistes qui, plus tard, l'ont mis à profit, ont eu devant eux un texte grec. Il est possible et même probable qu'il a existé au moins deux éditions de ce texte grec.

" 8°. C'est avec le secours de ce Recueil de Matthieu et du livre de Marc (i. 21-xv. 8) qu'un écrivain inconnu a

rédigé l'ouvrage que nous appelons aujourd'hui l'évangile selon Matthieu. Ce nom se justifie en tant que probablement l'ancien ouvrage de cet apôtre s'y retrouve, si ce n'est en entier, du moins dans ses éléments essentiels. Il se peut fort bien que cet écrivain ait pu compléter ses matériaux au moyen de la tradition orale. Cela s'appliquerait surtout aux premiers chapitres de son livre, ainsi qu'aux additions qu'il fait à l'histoire de la passion.

" 9°. Luc n'a pas connu cet évangile dit selon Matthieu, mais il a eu à sa disposition l'ancien Recueil de l'Apôtre et a pu y puiser la majeure partie de ceux de ses matériaux qui ne se trouvaient point dans le livre de Marc. Cependant il paraît qu'il a eu en main une autre édition de cet ouvrage, que celle dont s'est servi le rédacteur de notre premier évangile.

" 10°. Cependant tous les éléments de l'ouvrage de Luc de doivent pas être dérivés des différentes sources que nous avons distinguées jusqu'ici. Ainsi, il est vraisemblable que la partie du récit qui concerne la naissance de Jean Baptiste et de Jésus est parvenue à Luc dans une forme déjà plus ou moins fixée par la rédaction écrite.

" 11°. Le morceau Marc i. 1-20 est une introduction ajoutée au livre déjà complété par l'histoire de la passion, et rédigée par quelqu'un qui a pu et dû se servir, à cet effet, de nos évangiles actuels de Matthieu et de Luc.

" 12°. Le livre de Marc ainsi complété (i. 1-xvi. 8) a reçu plus tard diverse additions finales, destinées à lui donner une fin moins abrupte. Les douze derniers versets que nous y lisons maintenant (v. 9-20) manquaient encore au quatrième siècle à beaucoup d'exemplaires, et ont été redigés par quelqu'un qui a pu et dû se servir à cet effet des évangiles de Luc et de Jean et des Actes des Apôtres.

" 13°. Ainsi, dans un certain sens, chacun de nos trois évangiles a été l'une des sources d'un autre. Marc l'a été pour notre Matthieu et pour Luc; Luc et Matthieu l'ont été pour Marc, bien entendu, en tant qu'il s'agit de la forme actuelle de celui-ci. La critique s'est égarée en donnant une valeur absolue à des observations justes à l'égard de certains éléments. Elle s'est surtout trompée en admettant que l'auteur du troisième évangile a puisé dans le premier, tandis qu'il fallait dire qu'il a eu ses deux sources principales en

commun avec le rédacteur de celui-ci, mais que chacun d'eux les a connues sous une autre forme."

The reader will thus see that Reuss's opinion, formed on purely critical grounds, of the value of the first three Gospels, as authentic records from the hands of those whose names they have always borne, is higher than that of M. Renan. The third Gospel, he believes, has come down to us as "Luke" wrote it, and this writer was able to consult contemporaries and eye-witnesses, and had the use of written documents which are incorporated in the other two Gospels. By far the greater part of our present second Gospel is one of the very documents which "Luke" used, and was written by one who, if not the John Mark of the Acts himself, as he may well have been, had at least the means of being very well informed, and the very memoirs of the apostle Matthew are incorporated in our first Gospel. Yet, in the face of all this, Professor Huxley appeals to "the main results" of modern criticism, as represented by the works of Reuss among others, in support of his statement that we know "absolutely nothing" of the "originator or originators" of the Gospels! Is it my account of the results of that criticism, or his own, which deserves to be called "as gravely as surprisingly erroneous"?

As to the substance of Reuss's conclusions, it seems natural to ask why the few verses which, with many sound critics, he supposes to have been added at the beginning and end of the original draft of St Mark's Gospel, or to St Matthew's original memoirs, should be attributed to "unknown writers" instead of to the evangelists themselves. A man who confessedly wrote three-quarters of a book may be accepted as a *vera causa* for the remainder; but critics seem to forget that "unknown writers" are by the hypothesis unknown.

It may be interesting to compare with Reuss's conclusions those which are maintained in a very remarkable work by an independent English writer, the late Mr James Smith of Jordanhill, F.R.S., the author of the important work on the voyage and shipwreck of St Paul. He adduces very strong evidence to show that many of the variations in language between the evangelists are fully explained on the supposition of their having translated from Aramaic memoirs into

Greek—a possibility which Reuss does not seem to make much allowance for, but which has recently received strong support both in England and Germany (see 'Dictionary of the Bible,' second edition, 1893, Dr Sanday's art. "Gospels," vol. i. pp. 1242, 1243).

Taking this into account, Mr Smith states, as follows, the conclusions to which he was led, "from the evidence furnished by the writings of the evangelists, and other ancient writers, respecting the origin and connection of the Gospels" ('Dissertation on the Origin and Connection of the Gospels,' p. xxv) :—

"1st. Several of the apostles, including Matthew, *Peter*, and John, committed to writing accounts of the transactions of our Lord and His disciples in the language spoken by them—*i.e.*, Syro-Chaldaic or Aramaic, known in the New Testament and the works of the Fathers as Hebrew.

"2d. When the apostles were driven by persecution from Judæa, a history of the life of our Lord was drawn up from the original memoirs, in Hebrew and in Greek, by the apostle Matthew, for the use of the Jewish converts—the Greek being the same as the Gospel according to Matthew.

"3d. St Luke drew up, for the use of Theophilus, a new life of our Lord, founded upon the authority of eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word—including the Hebrew memoir of Peter and the Greek Gospel of Matthew.

"4th. After Peter's death or departure from Rome (ἔξοδον), St Mark translated the memoir, written by Peter, into Greek.

"5th. John, at a still later period, composed his Gospel from his own original memoirs, omitting much that was already narrated by the other evangelists, for reasons assigned by himself—(xxi. 23)."

Taking into account the additional considerations introduced by the supposition of Aramaic originals, there is a remarkable general similarity between Mr Smith's conclusions and those of M. Reuss. The late Bishop of Carlisle, in re-editing a few years ago Mr Smith's work on St Paul's voyage, expressed a just surprise at the present neglect of this admirable writer. His works deserve a great deal more attention than most of the German criticism which receives such excessive deference.

CHRISTIANITY AND AGNOSTICISM.[1]

Professor Huxley published a Rejoinder to the previous article in the 'Nineteenth Century' for April 1889; and it is reprinted in 'Science and Christian Tradition' at p. 263, *sq.* He commences with a reference to an article by Mrs Humphry Ward in the same number as mine, and to her article reference will be found further on. He then, after some reference to a personal question of mere temporary interest, proceeds with the reflections on myself and English theologians to which the first paragraph of the following article replies.

READERS who may be willing to look at this further reply on my part to Professor Huxley, need not be apprehensive of being entangled in any such obscure points of Church history as those with which the Professor has found it necessary to perplex them in support of his contentions; still less of being troubled with any personal explanations. The tone which Professor Huxley has thought fit to adopt, not only towards myself, but towards English theologians in general,

[1] From the 'Nineteenth Century,' May 1889.

excuses me from taking further notice of any personal considerations in the matter. I endeavoured to treat him with the respect due to his great scientific position, and he replies by sneering at theologians who are "mere counsel for creeds," saying that the serious question at issue "is whether theological men of science, or theological special pleaders, are to have the confidence of the general public," observing that Holland and Germany are "the only two countries in which, at the present time, professors of theology are to be found, whose tenure of their posts does not depend upon the results to which their inquiries lead them," and thus insinuating that English theologians are debarred by selfish interests from candid inquiry.[1] I shall

[1] The following are the passages in Professor Huxley's article which are here referred to :—

"Those who passed from Dr Wace's article in the last number of the 'Nineteenth Century' to the anticipatory confutation of it which followed in 'The New Reformation,' must have enjoyed the pleasure of a dramatic surprise—just as when the fifth act of a new play proves unexpectedly bright and interesting. Mrs Ward will, I hope, pardon the comparison, if I say that her effective clearing away of antiquated incumbrances from the lists of the controversy reminds me of nothing so much as of the action of some neat-handed, but strong-wristed, Phyllis, who, gracefully wielding her long-handled 'Turk's head,' sweeps away the accumulated results of the toil of generations of spiders. I am the more indebted to this luminous sketch of the results of critical investigation, as it is carried out among those theologians who are men of science and not mere counsel for creeds, since it has relieved me from

presently have something to say on the grave misrepresentation of German theology which these insinuations involve; but for myself and

the necessity of dealing with the greater part of Dr Wace's polemic, and enables me to devote more space to the really important issues which have been raised. . . .

"I believe that there is not a solitary argument I have used, or that I am about to use, which is original, or has anything to do with the fact that I have been chiefly occupied with natural science. They are all, facts and reasoning alike, either identical with, or consequential upon, propositions which are to be found in the works of scholars and theologians of the highest repute in the only two countries, Holland and Germany,[1] in which, at the present time, professors of theology are to be found, whose tenure of their posts does not depend upon the results to which their inquiries lead them.[2] . . .

"The most constant reproach which is launched against persons of my way of thinking is, that it is all very well for us to talk about the deductions of scientific thought, but what are the poor and the uneducated to do? Has it ever occurred to those who talk in this fashion that the Creeds and the Articles of their several Confessions, their determination of the exact nature and extent of the teachings of Jesus, their expositions of the real meaning of that which is written in the Epistles (to leave aside

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[1] The United States ought, perhaps, to be added, but I am not sure.

[2] Imagine that all our Chairs of Astronomy had been founded in the fourteenth century, and that their incumbents were bound to sign Ptolemaic articles. In that case, with every respect for the efforts of persons thus hampered to attain and expound the truth, I think men of common sense would go elsewhere to learn astronomy. Zeller's 'Vorträge und Abhandlungen' were published and came into my hands a quarter of a century ago. The writer's rank, as a theologian to begin with, and subsequently as a historian of Greek philosophy, is of the highest. Among these essays are two—"Das Urchristenthum" and "Die Tübinger historische Schule"—which are likely to be of more use to those who wish to know the real state of the case than all that the official "apologists," with their one eye on truth and the other on the tenets of their sect, have written. For the opinion of a scientific theologian about theologians of this stamp see pp. 225 and 227 of the 'Vorträge.'

for English theologians I shall not condescend to reply to them. I content myself with calling the reader's attention to the fact that, in this

all questions concerning the Old Testament), are nothing more than deductions, which, at any rate, profess to be the result of strictly scientific thinking, and which are not worth attending to unless they really possess that character? If it is not historically true that such and such things happened in Palestine eighteen centuries ago, what becomes of Christianity? And what is historical truth but that of which the evidence bears strict scientific investigation? I do not call to mind any problem of natural science which has come under my notice, which is more difficult, or more curiously interesting as a mere problem, than that of the origin of the Synoptic Gospels and that of the historical value of the narratives which they contain. The Christianity of the Churches stands or falls by the results of the purely scientific investigation of these questions. They were first taken up, in a purely scientific spirit, just about a century ago; they have been studied over and over again by men of vast knowledge and critical acumen; but he would be a rash man who should assert that any solution of these problems, as yet formulated, is exhaustive. The most that can be said is that certain prevalent solutions are certainly false, while others are more or less probably true.

"If I am doing my best to rouse my countrymen out of their dogmatic slumbers, it is not that they may be amused by seeing who gets the best of it in a contest between a 'scientist' and a theologian. The serious question is whether theological men of science, or theological special pleaders, are to have the confidence of the general public; it is the question whether a country in which it is possible for a body of excellent clerical and lay gentlemen to discuss, in public meeting assembled, how much it is desirable to let the congregations of the faithful know of the results of Biblical criticism, is likely to wake up with anything short of the grasp of a rough lay hand upon its shoulder; it is the question whether the New Testament books, being, as I believe they were, written and compiled by people who, according to their lights, were perfectly sincere, will not, when properly

controversy, it is Professor Huxley who finds it requisite for his argument to insinuate that his opponents are biassed by sordid motives; and I shall for the future leave him and his sneers out of account, and simply consider his arguments for as much, or as little, as they may be worth. For a similar reason I shall confine myself as far as possible to the issue which I raised at the Church Congress, and for which I then made myself responsible. I do not care, nor would it be of any avail, to follow over the wide and sacred field of Christian evidences an antagonist who resorts to the imputation of mean motives, and who, as I shall show, will not face the witnesses to whom he himself appeals. The manner in which Professor Huxley has met the particular issue he challenged will be a sufficient illustration to impartial minds of the value which is to be attached to any further assaults which he may make upon the Christian position.

Let me then briefly remind the reader of the simple question which is at issue between

studied as ordinary historical documents, afford us the means of self-criticism. And it must be remembered that the New Testament books are not responsible for the doctrine invented by the Churches that they are anything but ordinary historical documents. The author of the third Gospel tells us, as straightforwardly as a man can, that he has no claim to any other character than that of an ordinary compiler and editor, who had before him the works of many and variously qualified predecessors."

us. What I alleged was that "an Agnosticism which knows nothing of the relation of man to God must not only refuse belief to our Lord's most undoubted teaching, but must deny the reality of the spiritual convictions in which He lived and died." As evidence of that teaching and of those convictions I appealed to three testimonies — the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer, and the story of the Passion— and I urged that, whatever critical opinion might be held respecting the origin and structure of the four Gospels, there could not be any reasonable doubt that those testimonies "afford a true account of our Lord's essential belief and cardinal teaching." In his original reply, instead of meeting this appeal to three specific testimonies, Professor Huxley shifted the argument to the question of the general credibility of the Gospels, and appealed to "the main results of Biblical criticism, as they are set forth in the works of Strauss, Baur, Reuss, and Volkmar." He referred to these supposed "results" in support of his assertion that we know "absolutely nothing" of the authorship or genuineness of the four Gospels, and he challenged my reference to Renan as a witness to the fact that criticism has established no such results. In answer I quoted passage after passage from Renan and from

Reuss showing that the results at which they had arrived were directly contradictory of Professor Huxley's assertions. How does he meet this evidence? He simply says, in a footnote, "For the present I must content myself with warning my readers against any reliance upon Dr Wace's statements as to the results arrived at by modern criticism. They are as gravely as surprisingly erroneous." I might ask by what right Professor Huxley thus presumes to pronounce, as it were *ex cathedrâ*, without adducing any evidence, that the statements of another writer are "surprisingly erroneous." But I in my turn content myself with pointing out that, if my quotations from Renan and Reuss had been incorrect, he could not only have said so, but could have produced the correct quotations. But he does not deny, as of course he cannot, that Reuss, for example, really states, as the mature result of his investigations, what I quoted from him respecting the third Gospel—namely, that it was not improbably written by St Luke himself, and has reached us in its primitive form; and further, that its author used a book written either by St Mark, the disciple of St Peter, or at least by some one who had similar means of information, and that this book in all probability comprised in its primitive form what we read in

the present day from Mark i. 21 to xiii. 37. These are the results of modern criticism as stated by a Biblical critic in whom Professor Huxley expressed special confidence. It was not, therefore, my statements of the results of Biblical criticism with which Professor Huxley was confronted, but Reuss's statements; and unless he can show that my quotation was a false one, he ought to have had the candour to acknowledge that Reuss, at least, is on these vital points dead against him. Instead of any such frank admission, he endeavours to explain away the force of his reference to Reuss. It may, he says, be well for him

> "to observe that approbation of the manner in which a great Biblical scholar, for instance, Reuss, does his work does not commit me to the adoption of all, or indeed any, of his views; and, further, that the disagreements of a series of investigators do not in any way interfere with the fact that each of them has made important contributions to the body of truth ultimately established."[1]

But I beg to observe that Professor Huxley did not appeal to Reuss's methods, but to Reuss's results. He said that no retractation by M. Renan would sensibly affect "the *main results of Biblical criticism as they are set forth in the works of* Strauss, Baur, Reuss,

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 264.

and Volkmar." I have given him the results as set forth by Reuss in Reuss's own words, and all he has to offer in reply is an *ipse dixit* in a footnote, and an evasion in the text of his article.

But, as I said, this general discussion respecting the authenticity and credibility of the Gospels was itself an evasion of my argument, which rested upon the specific testimony of the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer, and the narrative of the Passion; and, accordingly, in his present rejoinder Professor Huxley, with much protestation that he made no evasion, addresses himself to these three points; and what is his answer? I feel obliged to characterise it as another evasion, and in one particular an evasion of a flagrant kind. The main point of his argument is that, from various circumstances, which I will presently notice more particularly, there is much reason to doubt whether the Sermon on the Mount was ever actually delivered in the form in which it is recorded in St Matthew. He notices, for instance, the combined similarity and difference between St Matthew's Sermon on the Mount and St Luke's so-called "Sermon on the Plain," and then he adds:—

"I thought that all fairly attentive and intelligent students of the Gospels, to say nothing of theologians

of reputation, knew these things. But how can any one who does know them have the conscience to ask whether there is 'any reasonable doubt' that the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Jesus of Nazareth?"[1]

It is a pity that Professor Huxley seems as incapable of accuracy in his quotations of an opponent's words as in his references to the authorities to whom he appeals. I did not ask "whether there is any reasonable doubt that the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Jesus of Nazareth," and I expressly observed, in the article to which Professor Huxley is replying, "that Professor Reuss thinks, as many good critics have thought, that the Sermon on the Mount combines various distinct utterances of our Lord." What I did ask, in words which Professor Huxley quotes, and therefore had before his eyes, was "whether there is any reasonable doubt that the Lord's Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount afford a true account of our Lord's essential belief and cardinal teaching." That is an entirely distinct question from the one which Professor Huxley discusses, and a confusion of the two is peculiarly inexcusable in a person who holds that purely human view of the Gospel narratives which he represents. If a

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 277.

long report of a speech appears in the 'Times,' and a shortened report appears in the 'Standard,' every one knows that we are none the less made acquainted—perhaps made still better acquainted—with the essential purport and cardinal meaning of the speaker. On the supposition, similarly, that St Matthew and St Luke are simply giving two distinct accounts of the same address, with such omissions and variations of order as suited the purposes of their respective narratives, we are in at least as good a position for knowing what was the main burden of the address as if we had only one account; and perhaps in a better position, as we see what were the points which both reporters deemed essential. As Professor Huxley himself observes, we have reports of speeches in ancient historians which are certainly not in the very words of the speakers; yet no one doubts that we know the main purport of the speeches of Pericles which Thucydides records.

This attempt, therefore, to answer my appeal to the substance of the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is a palpable evasion, and it is aggravated by the manner in which Professor Huxley quotes a high German authority in support of his contention. I am much obliged to him for appealing to Holtzmann; for, though Holtz-

mann's own conclusions respecting the books of the New Testament seem to me often extravagantly sceptical and far-fetched, and though I cannot, therefore, quite agree with Professor Huxley that his 'Lehrbuch' gives "a remarkably full and fair account of the present results of criticism," yet I agree that it gives on the whole a full and fair account of the course of criticism and of the opinions of its chief representatives. Instead, therefore, of imitating Professor Huxley, and pronouncing an *ipse dixit* as to the state of criticism or the opinions of critics, I am very glad to be able to refer to a book of which the authority is recognised by him, and which will save both my readers and myself from embarking on the wide and waste ocean of the German criticism of the last fifty years. "Holtzmann," says Professor Huxley in a note,[1] "has no doubt that the Sermon on the Mount is a compilation, or, as he calls it in his recently published 'Lehrbuch' (p. 372), 'an artificial mosaic work.'" Now, let the reader attend to what Holtzmann really says in the passage referred to. His words are: "In the so-called Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v.-vii.) we find constructed, on the basis of a real discourse of fundamental significance, a skilfully

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 277.

articulated mosaic work."[1] The phrase was not so long a one that Professor Huxley need have omitted the important words by which those he quotes are qualified. Holtzmann recognises, as will be seen, that a real discourse of fundamental significance underlies the Sermon on the Mount. That is enough for my purpose; for no reasonable person will suppose that the fundamental significance of the real discourse has been entirely obliterated, especially as the main purport of the sermon in St Luke is of the same character. But Professor Huxley must know perfectly well, as every one else does, that he would be maintaining a paradox, in which every critic of repute, to say nothing of every man of common-sense, would be against him, if he were to maintain that the Sermon on the Mount does not give a substantially correct idea of our Lord's teaching. But to admit this is to admit my point, so he rides off on a side-issue as to the question of the precise form in which the sermon was delivered.

I must, however, take some notice of Professor Huxley's argument on this irrelevant issue, as it affords a striking illustration of that superior

[1] "In der sog. Bergpredigt, Mt. 5-7, gibt sich eine, auf Grund einer wirklichen Rede von fundamentaler Bedeutung sich erhebende, kunstreich gegliederte Mosaikarbeit."

method of ratiocination in these matters on which he prides himself. I need not trouble the reader much on the questions he raises as to the relations of the first three Gospels. Any one who cares to see a full and thorough discussion of that difficult question, conducted with a complete knowledge of foreign criticism on the subject, and at the same time marked by the greatest lucidity and interest, may be referred to the admirable 'Introduction to the New Testament' by Dr Salmon, who, like Professor Huxley, is a Fellow of the Royal Society, and who became eminent as one of the first mathematicians of Europe before he became similarly eminent as a theologian. I am content here to let Professor Huxley's assumptions pass, as I am only concerned to illustrate the fallacious character of the reasoning he founds upon them. He says[1]:—

"I am of opinion that there is the gravest reason for doubting whether the 'Sermon on the Mount' was ever preached, and whether the so-called 'Lord's Prayer' was ever prayed, by Jesus of Nazareth. My reasons for this opinion are, among others, these:— There is now no doubt that the three synoptic Gospels, so far from being the work of three independent writers, are closely interdependent, and that in one of two ways. Either all three contain, as their foundation, versions, to a large extent verbally identical, of

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, pp. 272-274.

one and the same tradition; or two of them are thus closely dependent on the third; and the opinion of the majority of the best critics has of late years more and more converged towards the conviction that our canonical second Gospel (the so-called 'Mark's' Gospel) is that which most closely represents the primitive groundwork of the three. That I take to be one of the most valuable results of New Testament criticism, of immeasurably greater importance than the discussion about dates and authorship. But if, as I believe to be the case, beyond any rational doubt or dispute, the second Gospel is the nearest extant representative of the oldest tradition, whether written or oral, how comes it that it contains neither the 'Sermon on the Mount' nor the 'Lord's Prayer,' those typical embodiments, according to Dr Wace, of the 'essential belief and cardinal teaching' of Jesus?"

I have quoted every word of this passage because I am anxious for the reader to estimate the value of Professor Huxley's own statement of his case. It is, as he says, the opinion of many critics of authority that a certain fixed tradition, written or oral, was used by the writers of the first three Gospels. In the first place, why this should prevent those three Gospels from being the work of "three independent writers" I am at a loss to conceive. If Mr Froude, the late Professor Brewer, and the late Mr Green each use the Rolls Calendars of the reign of Henry VIII., I do not see that this abolishes their in-

dividuality. Any historian who describes the Peloponnesian War uses the memoirs of that war written by Thucydides; but Bishop Thirlwall and Mr Grote were, I presume, independent writers. But to pass to a more important point, that which is assumed is that a certain alleged tradition, written or oral, was the groundwork of our three first Gospels, and it is therefore older than they are. Let it be granted, for the sake of argument. But how does this prove that the tradition in question is "the oldest," so that anything which was not in it is thereby discredited? It was, let us allow, an old tradition, used by the writers of the first three Gospels. But how does this fact raise the slightest presumption against the probability that there were other traditions, equally old, which they might use with equal justification so far as their scope required?

Professor Huxley alleges, in short, and I do not care to dispute the allegation, that the first three Gospels embody a certain record older than themselves. But by what right does he ask me to accept this as evidence, or as affording even the slightest presumption, that there was no other? Between his allegation in one sentence that the second Gospel "most closely represents the primitive groundwork of the three," and his

allegation, in the next sentence but one, that "the second Gospel is the nearest extant representative of the oldest tradition," there is an absolute and palpable *non sequitur*. It is a mere juggle of phrases, and upon this juggle the whole of his subsequent argument on this point depends. St Mark's Gospel may very well represent the oldest tradition *relative to the common matter of the three*, without, therefore, necessarily representing "the oldest tradition" in such a sense as to be a touchstone for all other reports of our Lord's life. Professor Huxley must know very well that, from the time of Schleiermacher, many critics have believed in the existence of another document containing a collection of our Lord's discourses. Holtzmann concludes[1] that "under all the circumstances the hypothesis of two sources offers the most probable solution of the synoptical problem;" and it is surely incredible that no old traditions of our Lord's teaching should have existed beyond those which are common to the three Gospels. St Luke, in fact, in that preface which Professor Huxley has no hesitation in using for his own purposes, says that "many had taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us;" but

[1] Lehrbuch, second edition, 1886, p. 376.

Professor Huxley asks us to assume that none of these records were old, and none trustworthy, but that particular one which furnishes a sort of skeleton to the first three Gospels. There is no evidence whatever, beyond Professor Huxley's private judgment, for such an assumption. Nay, he himself tells us[1] that, according to Holtzmann, it is at present a "burning question" among critics "whether the relatively primitive narrative and the root of the other synoptic texts is contained in Matthew or in Mark." Yet while his own authority tells him that this is a burning question, he treats it as settled in favour of St Mark, "beyond any rational doubt or dispute," and employs this assumption as sufficiently solid ground on which to rest his doubts of the genuineness of the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer!

But let us pass to another point in Professor Huxley's mode of argument. Let us grant, again for the sake of argument, his *non sequitur* that the second Gospel is the nearest extant representative of the oldest tradition. "How comes it," he asks, "that it contains neither the Sermon on the Mount nor the Lord's Prayer?" Well, that is a very interesting inquiry, which has, in point of fact, often been considered by

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 273.

Christian divines; and various answers are conceivable, equally reasonable and sufficient. If it was St Mark's object to record our Lord's acts rather than His teaching, what right has Professor Huxley, from his purely human point of view, to find fault with him? If, from a Christian point of view, St Mark was inspired by a divine guidance to present the most vivid, brief, and effective sketch possible of our Lord's action as a Saviour, and for that purpose to leave to another writer the description of our Lord as a Teacher, the phenomenon is not less satisfactorily explained. St Mark, according to that tradition of the Church which Professor Huxley believes to be quite worthless, but which his authority Holtzmann does not, was in great measure the mouthpiece of St Peter. Now St Peter is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, in his address to Cornelius, as summing up our Lord's life in these words: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him;" and this is very much the point of view represented in St Mark's Gospel.

When, in fact, Professor Huxley asks,[1] in answer to Holtzmann, who is again unfavour-

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 277, note.

able to his views, "what conceivable motive could 'Mark' have for omitting it?" the answers that arise are innumerable. Perhaps, as has been suggested, St Mark was more concerned with acts than words; perhaps he wanted to be brief; perhaps he was writing for persons who wanted one kind of record and not another; and, above all, perhaps it was not so much a question of "omission" as of selection. It is really astonishing that this latter consideration never seems to cross the mind of Professor Huxley and writers like him. The Gospels are among the briefest biographies in the world. I have sometimes thought that there is evidence of something superhuman about them in the mere fact that, while human biographers labour through volumes in order to give us some idea of their subject, every one of the Gospels, occupying no more than a chapter or two in length of an ordinary biography, nevertheless gives us an image of our Lord sufficiently vivid to have made Him the living companion of all subsequent generations. But if "the Gospel of Jesus Christ" was to be told within the compass of the sixteen chapters of St Mark, some selection had to be made out of the mass of our Lord's words and deeds as recorded by the tradition of those who "from

the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word." The very greatness and effectiveness of these four Gospels consist in this wonderful power of selection, like that by which a great artist depicts a character and a figure in half-a-dozen touches; and Professor Huxley may perhaps, to put the matter on its lowest level, find out a conceivable motive for St Mark's omissions when he can produce such an effective narrative as St Mark's. As St John says at the end of his Gospel, "there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." So St John, like St Mark, had to make his selection, and selection involves omission.

But, after all, I venture to ask whether anything can be more preposterous than this supposition that because a certain tradition is the oldest authority, therefore every other authority is discredited? Boswell writes a Life of Johnson; therefore every record of Johnson's acts or words which is not in Boswell is to be suspected. Archdeacon Hare writes a Life of Sterling first, and Carlyle writes one afterwards; therefore nothing in Carlyle's life is to be trusted which was not also in the Arch-

deacon's. What seems to me so astonishing about Professor Huxley's articles is not the wildness of their conclusions, but the rottenness of their ratiocination. To take another instance[1]:—

"'Luke' either knew the collection of loosely connected and aphoristic utterances which appear under the name of the 'Sermon on the Mount' in 'Matthew,' or he did not. If he did not, he must have been ignorant of the existence of such a document as our canonical 'Matthew,' a fact which does not make for the genuineness, or the authority, of that book. If he did, he has shown that he does not care for its authority on a matter of fact of no small importance; and that does not permit us to conceive that he believed the first Gospel to be the work of an authority to whom he ought to defer, let alone that of an apostolic eye-witness."

I pass by the description of the Sermon on the Mount as a "collection of loosely connected utterances," though it is a kind of begging of a very important question. But supposing St Luke to have been ignorant of the existence of St Matthew's Gospel, how does this reflect on the genuineness of that book unless we know, as no one does, that St Matthew's Gospel was written before St Luke's, and sufficiently long before it to have become known to him? Or, if

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 276.

he did know it, where is the disrespect to its authority in his having given for his own purposes an abridgment of that which St Matthew gave more fully? Professor Huxley might almost seem dominated by the mechanical theory of inspiration which he denounces in his antagonists. He writes as if there were something absolutely sacred, neither to be altered nor added to, in the mere words of some old authority of which he conceives himself to be in possession. Dr Abbott, with admirable labour, has had printed for him, in clear type, the words or bits of words which are common to the first three Gospels, and he seems immediately to adopt the anathema of the Book of Revelation, and to proclaim to every man, evangelists and apostles included, "if any man shall add unto these things, . . . and if any man shall take away from the words" of this "common tradition" of Dr Abbott, he shall be forthwith scientifically excommunicated. I venture to submit, as a mere matter of common-sense, that if three persons used one document, it is the height of rashness to conclude that it contained nothing but what they all three quote; that it is not only possible but probable that, while certain parts were used by all, each may have used some parts as suitable to his own purpose

which the others did not find suitable to theirs; and lastly, that the fact of there having been one such document in existence is so far from being evidence that there were no others, that it even creates some presumption that there were. In short, I must beg leave to represent, not so much that Professor Huxley's conclusions are wrong, but that there is absolutely no validity in the reasoning by which he endeavours to support them. It is not, in fact, reasoning at all, but mere presumption and guesswork, inconsistent, moreover, with all experience and common-sense.

Of course, if Professor Huxley's quibbles against the Sermon on the Mount go to pieces, so do his cavils at the authenticity of the Lord's Prayer; and, indeed, on these two points I venture to think the case for which I was contending is carried by the mere fact that it seems necessary to Professor Huxley's position that he should dispute them. If he cannot maintain his ground without pushing his Agnosticism to such a length as to deny the substantial genuineness of the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer, I think he will be found to have allowed enough to satisfy reasonable men that his case must be a bad one. I shall not, therefore, waste more time on these points, as I must say some-

thing on his strange treatment of the third point in the evangelical records to which I referred, the story of the Passion. It is really difficult to take seriously what he says on this subject. He says[1]:—

"I am not quite sure what Dr Wace means by this. I am not aware that any one (with the exception of certain ancient heretics) has propounded doubts as to the reality of the crucifixion; and certainly I have no inclination to argue about the precise accuracy of every detail of that pathetic story of suffering and wrong. But if Dr Wace means, as I suppose he does, that that which, according to the orthodox view, happened after the Crucifixion, and which is, in a dogmatic sense, the most important part of the story, is founded on solid historical proofs, I must beg leave to express a diametrically opposite conviction."

Professor Huxley is not quite sure what I mean by the story of the Passion, but supposes I mean the story of the Resurrection! It is barely credible that he can have supposed anything of the kind; but by this gratuitous supposition he has again evaded the issue I proposed to him, and has shifted the argument to another topic which, however important in itself, is entirely irrelevant to the particular point in question. If he really supposed that when I said the Passion I meant the Resurrec-

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 278.

tion, it is only another proof of his incapacity for strict argument, at least on these subjects. I not only used the expression "the story of the Passion," but I explicitly stated in my reply to him for what purpose I appealed to it. I said that "that story involves the most solemn attestation, again and again, of truths of which an Agnostic coolly says he knows nothing;" and I mentioned particularly our Lord's final utterance, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," as conveying our Lord's attestation, in His death-agony, to His relation to God as His Father. That exclamation is recorded by St Luke; but let me remind the reader of what is recorded by St Mark, upon whom Professor Huxley mainly relies. There we have the account of the agony in Gethsemane and of our Lord's prayer to His Father; we have the solemn challenge of the high priest, "Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" and our Lord's reply, "I am; and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven," with His immediate condemnation, on the ground that in this statement He had spoken blasphemy. On the cross, moreover, St Mark records His affecting appeal to His Father: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" All this solemn evidence

Professor Huxley puts aside with the mere passing observation that he has "no inclination to argue about the precise accuracy of every detail of that pathetic story of suffering and wrong." But these prayers and declarations of our Lord are not mere details; they are of the very essence of the story of the Passion; and whether Professor Huxley is inclined to argue about them or not, he will find that all serious people will be influenced by them to the end of time, unless they can be shown to be unhistorical.

At all events, by refusing to consider their import, Professor Huxley has again, in the most flagrant manner, evaded my challenge. I not only mentioned specifically "the story of the Passion," but I explained what I meant by it; and Professor Huxley asks us to believe that he does not understand what I referred to: he refuses to face that story, and he raises an irrelevant issue about the Resurrection. It is irrelevant, because the point specifically at issue between us is not the truth of the Christian creed, but the meaning of Agnosticism, and the responsibilities which Agnosticism involves. I say that whether Agnosticism be justifiable or not, it involves a denial of the beliefs in which Jesus lived and died. It would equally involve

a denial of them had He never risen; and if Professor Huxley really thinks, therefore, that a denial of the Resurrection affects the evidence afforded by the Passion, he must be incapable of distinguishing between two successive and entirely distinct occurrences.

But the manner in which Professor Huxley has treated this irrelevant issue deserves perhaps a few words, for it is another characteristic specimen of his mode of argument. I note, by the way, that after referring to "the facts of the case as stated by the oldest extant narrative of them"—by which he means the story in St Mark, though this is not a part of that common tradition of the three Gospels on which he relies; for, as he observes, the accounts in St Matthew and St Luke present marked variations from it—he adds[1]:—

"I do not see why any one should have a word to say against the inherent probability of that narrative; and for my part, I am quite ready to accept it as an historical fact, that so much and no more is positively known of the end of Jesus of Nazareth."

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[1] I subjoin the whole passage from 'Science and Christian Tradition,' pp. 279-282:—

"What do we find when the accounts of the events in question, contained in the three Synoptic Gospels, are compared together? In the oldest, there is a simple, straightforward statement which, for anything that I have to urge to the contrary, may be exactly true. In the other two, there is, round this possible and

We have, then, the important admission that Professor Huxley has not a word to say against

probable nucleus, a mass of accretions of the most questionable character.

"The cruelty of death by crucifixion depended very much upon its lingering character. If there were a support for the weight of the body, as not unfrequently was the practice, the pain during the first hours of the infliction was not, necessarily, extreme ; nor need any serious physical symptoms, at once, arise from the wounds made by the nails in the hands and feet, supposing they were nailed, which was not invariably the case. When exhaustion set in, and hunger, thirst, and nervous irritation had done their work, the agony of the sufferer must have been terrible ; and the more terrible that in the absence of any effectual disturbance of the machinery of physical life, it might be prolonged for many hours, or even days. Temperate, strong men, such as were the ordinary Galilean peasants, might live for several days on the cross. It is necessary to bear these facts in mind when we read the account contained in the fifteenth chapter of the second Gospel.

"Jesus was crucified at the third hour (xv. 25), and the narrative seems to imply that he died immediately after the ninth hour (ver. 34). In this case, he would have been crucified only six hours ; and the time spent on the cross cannot have been much longer, because Joseph of Arimathæa must have gone to Pilate, made his preparations, and deposited the body in the rock-cut tomb before sunset, which, at that time of the year, was about the twelfth hour. That any one should die after only six hours' crucifixion could not have been at all in accordance with Pilate's large experience of the effects of that method of punishment. It, therefore, quite agrees with what might be expected that Pilate 'marvelled if he were already dead,' and required to be satisfied on this point by the testimony of the Roman officer who was in command of the execution party. Those who have paid attention to the extraordinarily difficult question, What are the indisputable signs of death?—will be able to estimate the value of the opinion of a rough soldier on such a subject ; even if his report to the Procurator were in no wise affected by the fact that

the historic credibility of the narrative in the 15th chapter of St Mark, and accordingly he

the friend of Jesus, who anxiously awaited his answer, was a man of influence and of wealth.

"The inanimate body, wrapped in linen, was deposited in a spacious,[1] cool rock chamber, the entrance of which was closed, not by a well-fitting door, but by a stone rolled against the opening, which would of course allow free passage of air. A little more than thirty-six hours afterwards (Friday, 6 P.M., to Sunday, 6 A.M., or a little after) three women visit the tomb and find it empty. And they are told by a young man 'arrayed in a white robe' that Jesus is gone to his native country of Galilee, and that the disciples and Peter will find him there.

"Thus it stands, plainly recorded, in the oldest tradition that, for any evidence to the contrary, the sepulchre may have been vacated at any time during the Friday or Saturday nights. If it is said that no Jew would have violated the Sabbath by taking the former course, it is to be recollected that Joseph of Arimathæa might well be familiar with that wise and liberal interpretation of the fourth commandment, which permitted works of mercy to men—nay, even the drawing of an ox or an ass out of a pit—on the Sabbath. At any rate, the Saturday night was free to the most scrupulous of observers of the Law.

"These are the facts of the case as stated by the oldest extant narrative of them. I do not see why any one should have a word to say against the inherent probability of that narrative; and, for my part, I am quite ready to accept it as an historical fact, that so much and no more is positively known of the end of Jesus of Nazareth. On what grounds can a reasonable man be asked to believe any more? So far as the narrative in the first Gospel, on the one hand, and those in the third Gospel and the Acts, on the other, go beyond what is stated in the second Gospel, they are hopelessly discrepant with one another. And this is the more significant because the pregnant phrase 'some doubted,' in the first Gospel, is ignored in the third."

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[1] Spacious, because a young man could sit in it "on the right side" (xvi. 5), and therefore with plenty of room to spare.

proceeds to quote its statements for the purpose of his argument. That argument, in brief, is that our Lord might very well have survived His crucifixion, have been removed still living to the tomb, have been taken out of it on the Friday or Saturday night by Joseph of Arimathæa, and have recovered and found His way to Galilee. So much Professor Huxley is prepared to believe, and he asks, "On what grounds can a reasonable man be asked to believe any more?" But a prior question is, On what grounds can a reasonable man be asked to believe as much as this? In the first place, if St Mark's narrative is to be the basis of discussion, why does Professor Huxley leave out of account the scourging, with the indication of weakness in our Lord's inability to bear His cross, and treat Him as exposed to crucifixion in the condition simply of "temperate, strong men, such as were the ordinary Galilean peasants"? In the next place, I am informed by good medical authority that he is quite mistaken in saying that "no serious physical symptoms need, at once, arise from the wounds made by the nails in the hands and feet," and that, on the contrary, very grave symptoms would ordinarily arise in the course of no long time from such severe wounds, left to fester, with the nails in them, for six

hours. In the third place, Professor Huxley takes no account of the piercing of our Lord's side, and of the appearance of blood and water from the wound, which is solemnly attested by one witness. It is true that incident is not recorded by St Mark; but Professor Huxley must disprove the witness before he can leave it out of account. But, lastly, if Professor Huxley's account of the matter be true, the first preaching of the Church must have been founded on a deliberate fraud, of which some at least of our Lord's most intimate friends were guilty, or to which they were accessory; and I thought that supposition was practically out of account among reasonable men.

Professor Huxley then argues as if he had only to deal with the further evidence of St Paul. That, indeed, is evidence of a far more momentous character than he recognises; but it is by no means the most important. It is beyond question that the Christian society, from the earliest moment of its existence, believed in our Lord's resurrection. Baur frankly says that there is no doubt about the Church having been founded on this belief, though he cannot explain how the belief arose. If the resurrection be a fact, the belief is explained; but it is certainly not explained by the supposition of a fraud on

the part of Joseph of Arimathæa. As to Professor Huxley's assertion that the accounts in the three Gospels are "hopelessly discrepant," it is easily made and as easily denied; but it is out of all reason that Professor Huxley's bare assertion on such a point should outweigh the opinions of some of the most learned judges of evidence, who have thought no such thing. It would be absurd to attempt to discuss that momentous story as a side-issue in a review. It is enough to have pointed out that Professor Huxley discusses it without even taking into account the statements of the very narrative on which he relies. The manner in which he sets aside St Paul is equally reckless:—

"According to his own showing, Paul, in the vigour of his manhood, with every means of becoming acquainted, at first hand, with the evidence of eye-witnesses, not merely refused to credit them, but 'persecuted the Church of God and made havoc of it.' . . . Yet this strange man, because he has a vision one day, at once, and with equally headlong zeal, flies to the opposite pole of opinion."[1]

"A vision!" The whole question is, What vision? How can Professor Huxley be sure that no vision could be of such a nature as to justify a man in acting on it? If, as we are

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 282.

told, our Lord personally appeared to St Paul, spoke to him, and gave him specific commands, was he to disbelieve his own eyes and ears, as well as his own conscience, and go up to Jerusalem to cross-examine Peter and John and James? If the vision was a real one, he was at once under orders, and had to obey our Lord's injunctions. It is, to say the least, rash, if not presumptuous, for Professor Huxley to declare that such a vision as St Paul had would not have convinced him; and at all events the question is not disposed of by calling the manifestation "a vision." Two things are certain about St Paul. One is that he was in the confidence of the Pharisees, and was their trusted agent in persecuting the Christians; and the other is that he was afterwards in the confidence of the Apostles, and knew all their side of the case. He holds, therefore, the unique position of having had equal access to all that could be alleged on both sides; and the result is that, being fully acquainted with all that the Pharisees could urge against the resurrection, he nevertheless gave up his whole life to attesting its truth, and threw in his lot, at the cost of martyrdom, with those whom he had formerly persecuted. Professor Huxley reminds us that he did all this in the full vigour of manhood, and in spite of

strong, and even violent, prejudices. This is not a witness to be put aside in Professor Huxley's offhand manner.

But the strangest part of Professor Huxley's article remains to be noticed; and so far as the main point at issue between us is concerned, I need hardly have noticed anything else. He proceeds to a long and intricate discussion, quite needless, as I think, for his main object, respecting the relations between the Nazarenes, Ebionites, Jewish and Gentile Christians, first in the time of Justin Martyr, and then of St Paul. Into this discussion, in the course of which he makes assumptions which, as Holtzmann will tell him, are as much questioned by the German criticism on which he relies as by English theologians, it is unnecessary for me to follow him. The object of it is to establish a conclusion, which is all with which I am concerned. That conclusion is, that "if the primitive Nazarenes of whom the Acts speaks were orthodox Jews, what sort of probability can there be that Jesus was anything else?"[1] But what more is necessary for the purpose of my argument? To say, indeed, that this *a priori* probability places us "in a position to form a safe judgment of the limits within which the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth must have

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 302.

been confined,"[1] is to beg a great question, for it assumes that our Lord could not have transcended those limits unless His disciples transcended them simultaneously with Him. But if our Lord's beliefs were those of an orthodox Jew, we certainly know enough of them to be quite sure that they involved a denial of Professor Huxley's Agnosticism. An orthodox Jew certainly believed in God, and in his responsibility to God, and in a Divine Revelation and a Divine Law. It is, says Professor Huxley, "extremely probable" that He appealed "to those noble conceptions of religion which constituted the pith and kernel of the teaching of the great prophets of His nation seven hundred years earlier." But if so, His first principles involved the assertion of religious realities which an Agnostic refuses to acknowledge. Professor Huxley has, in fact, dragged his readers through this thorny question of Jewish and Gentile Christianity in order to establish, at the end of it, and as it seems quite unconsciously, an essential part of the very allegation which I originally made. I said that a person who "knows nothing" of God asserts the belief of Jesus of Nazareth to have been unfounded, repudiates His example, and denies His authority. Professor Huxley, in order to

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 298.

answer this contention, offers to prove with great elaboration that Jesus was an orthodox Jew, and consequently that His belief did involve what an Agnostic rejects. How much beyond these elementary truths Jesus taught is a further and a distinct question. What I was concerned to maintain is, that a man cannot be an Agnostic with respect to even the elementary truths of religion without rejecting the example and authority of Jesus Christ; and Professor Huxley, though he still endeavours to avoid facing the fact, has established it by a roundabout method of his own.

I suppose I must also reply to Professor Huxley's further challenge respecting my belief in the story of the Gadarene swine, though the difficulty of which he makes so much seems to me too trivial to deserve serious notice. He says "there are two stories, one in 'Mark' and 'Luke,' and the other in 'Matthew.' In the former . . . there is one possessed man, in the latter there are two,"[1] and he asks me which I believe? My answer is, that I believe both, and that the supposition of there being any inconsistency between them can only arise on that mechanical view of inspiration from which Professor Huxley seems unable to shake himself free. Certainly "the

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 304.

most unabashed of reconcilers cannot well say that one man is the same as two, or two as one;"[1] but no one need be abashed to say that the greater number includes the less, and that if two men met our Lord, one certainly did. If I go into the operating-theatre of King's College Hospital, and see an eminent surgeon perform a new or rare operation on one or two patients, and if I tell a friend afterwards that I saw the surgeon perform such and such an operation on a patient, will he feel in any perplexity if he meets another spectator half an hour afterwards who says he saw the operation performed on two patients? All that I should have been thinking of was the nature of the operation, which is as well described by reference to one patient as to half a dozen; and similarly St Mark and St Luke may have thought that the only important point was the nature of the miracle itself, and not the number of possessed men who were the subjects of it. It is quite unnecessary, therefore, for me to consider all the elaborate dilemmas in which Professor Huxley would entangle me respecting the relative authority of the first three Gospels. As two includes one, and as both witnesses are in my judgment equally to be trusted, I adopt the supposition which includes the statements of

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, p. 306.

both. It is a pure assumption that inspiration requires verbal accuracy in the reporting of every detail, and an assumption quite inconsistent with our usual tests of truth. Just as no miracle has saved the texts of the Scriptures from corruption in secondary points, so no miracle has been wrought to exclude the ordinary variations of truthful reporters in the Gospel narratives. But a miracle, in my belief, has been wrought, in inspiring four men to give, within the compass of their brief narratives, such a picture of the life and work and teaching, of the death and resurrection, of the Son of man as to illuminate all human existence for the future, and to enable men "to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and believing to have life through His name."

It is with different feelings from those which Professor Huxley provokes that I turn for a while to Mrs Humphry Ward's article on "The New Reformation." Since he adopts that article as a sufficient confutation of mine, I feel obliged to notice it, though I am sorry to appear in any position of antagonism to its author. Apart from other considerations, I am under much obligation to Mrs Ward for the valuable series of articles which she contributed to the 'Dictionary of Christian Biography,' under my

editorship, upon the obscure but interesting history of the Goths in Spain. I trust that, in her account of the effect upon Robert Elsmere and Merriman of absorption in that barbarian scene, she is not describing her own experience and the source of her own aberrations. But I feel especially bound to treat her argument with consideration, and to waive any opposition which can be avoided. I am sorry that she too questions the possibility in this country of "a scientific—that is to say, an unprejudiced, an unbiassed — study of theology, under present conditions," and I should have hoped that she would have had too much confidence in her colleagues in the important work to which I refer to cast this slur upon them. Their labours have, in fact, been received by German scholars of all schools with sufficient appreciation to render their vindication unnecessary; and if Professor Huxley can extend his study of German theological literature much beyond Zeller's 'Vorträge' of "a quarter of a century ago" or Ritschl's writings of "nearly forty years ago," he will not find himself countenanced by Church historians in Germany in his contempt for the recent contributions of English scholars to early Church History. However, it is the more easy for me to waive all differences of this

nature with Mrs Ward, because it is unnecessary for me to look beyond her article for its own refutation. Her main contention, or that at least for which Professor Huxley appeals to her, seems to be, that it is a mistake to suppose the rationalistic movement of Germany to have been defeated in the sphere of New Testament criticism, and she selects more particularly for her protest a recent statement in the 'Quarterly Review' that this criticism, and particularly the movement led by Baur, is "an attack which has failed." The Quarterly Reviewer may be left to take care of himself; but I would only ask, What is the evidence which Mrs Ward adduces to the contrary? It may be summed up in two words —a prophecy and a romance. She does not adduce any evidence that the Tübingen school, which is the one we are chiefly concerned with, did not fail to establish its specific contentions; on the contrary, she says (p. 472) that "history protested," and she goes on to prophesy the success of other speculations which arose from that protest; concluding with an imaginary sketch, like that with which 'Robert Elsmere' ends, of a "new Reformation preparing, struggling into utterance and being, all around us." "It is close upon us—it is prepared by all the forces of history and mind—its rise sooner or

later is inevitable." This is prophecy, but it is not argument; and a little attention to Mrs Ward's own statements will exhibit a very different picture. The Christian representative in her dialogue exclaims:—

"What is the whole history of German criticism but a series of brilliant failures, from Strauss downwards? One theorist follows another—now Mark is uppermost as the Ur-Evangelist, now Matthew—now the Synoptics are sacrificed to St John, now St John to the Synoptics. Baur relegates one after another of the Epistles to the second century because his theory cannot do with them in the first. Harnack tells you that Baur's theory is all wrong, and that Thessalonians and Philippians must go back again. Volkmar sweeps together Gospels and Epistles in a heap towards the middle of the second century as the earliest date for almost all of them; and Dr Abbott, who, as we are told, has absorbed all the learning of the Germans, puts Mark before 70 A.D., Matthew just about 70 A.D., and Luke about 80 A.D.; Strauss's mythical theory is dead and buried by common consent; Baur's tendency theory is much the same; Renan will have none of the Tübingen school; Volkmar is already antiquated; and Pfleiderer's fancies are now in the order of the day."[1]

A better statement could hardly be wanted of what is meant by an attack having failed; and now let the reader observe how Merriman in the

[1] Nineteenth Century, March 1889, p. 462.

dialogue meets it. Does he deny any of those allegations? Not one. "Very well," he says, "let us leave the matter there for the present. Suppose we go to the Old Testament;" and then he proceeds to dwell on the concessions made to the newest critical school of Germany by a few distinguished English divines at the Church Congress of 1888. I must, indeed, dispute Mrs Ward's representation of that rather one-sided debate as amounting to "a collapse of English orthodoxy," or as justifying her statement that "the Church of England practically gives its verdict" in favour, for instance, of the school which regards the Pentateuch, or the Hexateuch, as "the peculiar product of that Jewish religious movement which, beginning with Josiah, . . . yields its final fruits long after the exile."[1] Not only has the Church of England given no such verdict, but German criticism has as yet given no such verdict. For example, in the Introduction to the Old Testament by one of the first Hebrew scholars of Germany, Professor Hermann Strack, contained in the valuable 'Handbook of the Theological Sciences,' edited, with the assistance of several distinguished scholars, by Professor Zöckler, I find at p. 215 of the third edition, published in 1889, the following brief summary

[1] Nineteenth Century, March 1889, pp. 464, 465.

of what, in Dr Strack's opinion, is the result of the controversy so far :—

"The future results of further labours in the field of Pentateuch criticism cannot, of course, be predicted in particulars. But, in spite of the great assent which the view of Graf and Wellhausen at present enjoys, we are nevertheless convinced that it will not permanently lead to any essential alteration in the conception which has hitherto prevailed of the history of Israel, and in particular of the work of Moses. On the other hand, one result will certainly remain, that the Pentateuch was not composed by Moses himself, but was compiled by later editors from various original sources. . . . But the very variety of these sources may be applied in favour of the credibility of the Pentateuch."

In other words, it may be said that Dr Strack regards it as established that "The Law of Moses" is a title of the same character as "The Psalms of David," the whole collection being denominated from its principal author. But he is convinced that the general conclusions of the prevalent school of Old Testament criticism, which involve an entire subversion of our present conceptions of Old Testament history, will not be maintained. In the face of this opinion, it does not seem presumptuous to express an apprehension that the younger school of Hebrew scholars in England, of whose concessions Mrs Ward makes so much, have gone too far and too fast ; and, at all events, it is clear from what Dr

Strack says—and I might quote also Delitzsch and Dillmann — that it is much too soon to assume that the school of whose conquests Mrs Ward boasts is supreme. But, even supposing it were, what has this to do with the admitted and undoubted failures on the other side, in the field of New Testament criticism? If it be the fact, as Mrs Ward does not deny, that not only Strauss's but Baur's theories and conclusions are now rejected; if it has been proved that Baur was entirely wrong in supposing that the greater part of the New Testament books were late productions, written with a controversial purpose—what is the use of appealing to the alleged success of the German critics in another field? If Baur is confuted, he is confuted, and there is an end of his theories; though he may have been useful, as rash theorisers have often been, in stimulating investigation. In the same valuable Handbook of Dr Zöckler's, already quoted, I find, under the History of the Science of Introduction to the New Testament, the heading (p. 15, vol. i. pt. 2), "Result of the Controversy and End of the Tübingen School."

"The Tübingen school," the writer concludes (p. 20), "could not but fall as soon as its assumptions were recognised and given up. As Hilgenfeld confesses, 'it went to an unjustifiable length, and inflicted

too deep wounds on the Christian faith. . . . No enduring results in matters of substance have been produced by it.'"

Such is the judgment of an authoritative German Handbook on the writer to whom, in Merriman's opinion, "we owe all that we really *know* at the present moment about the New Testament;" as though the Christian thought and life of eighteen hundred years had produced no knowledge on that subject!

In fact, Mrs Ward's comparison seems to me to point in exactly the opposite direction.

"I say to myself," says her spokesman (p. 466), "it has taken some thirty years for German critical science to conquer English opinion in the matter of the Old Testament. . . . How much longer will it take before we feel the victory of the same science . . . with regard to that history which is the natural heir and successor of the Jewish—the history of Christian origins?"

Remembering that the main movement of New Testament criticism in Germany dates not thirty, but more than fifty years back, and that thirty years ago Baur's school enjoyed the same applause in Germany as that of Wellhausen does now, does it not seem more in conformity with experience and with probability to anticipate that, as the Germans themselves, with longer experience, find they had been too hasty in

following Baur, so, with an equally long experience, they may find they have similarly been too hasty in accepting Wellhausen? The fever of revolutionary criticism on the New Testament was at its height after thirty years, and the science has subsided into comparative health after twenty more. The fever of the revolutionary criticism of the Old Testament is now at its height, but the parallel suggests a similar return to a more sober and common-sense state of mind. The most famous name, in short, of German New Testament criticism is now associated with exploded theories; and we are asked to shut our eyes to this undoubted fact because Mrs Ward prophesies a different fate for the name now most famous in Old Testament criticism. I prefer the evidence of established fact to that of romantic prophecy.

But these observations suggest another consideration, which has a very important bearing on that general disparagement of English theology and theologians which Professor Huxley expresses so offensively, and which Mrs Ward encourages. She and Professor Huxley talk as if German theology were all rationalistic, and English theology alone conservative. Professor Huxley invites his readers to study in Mrs Ward's article

"the results of critical investigation, as it is carried out among those theologians who are men of science and not mere counsel for creeds;" and he appeals to "the works of scholars and theologians of the highest repute in the only two countries, Holland and Germany, in which, at the present time, professors of theology are to be found, whose tenure of their posts does not depend upon the results to which their inquiries lead them."[1]

Well, passing over the insult to theologians in all other countries, what is the consequence of this freedom in Germany itself? Is it seen that all learned and distinguished theologians in that country are of the opinions of Professor Huxley and Mrs Ward? The quotations I have given will serve to illustrate the fact that the contrary is the case. If any one wants vigorous, learned, and satisfactory answers to Professor Huxley and Mrs Ward, Germany is the best place to which he can go for them. There are plenty of professors and theologians in Germany who adhere substantially to the old Christian faith, and who are at least as distinguished, as learned, as laborious, as those who adhere to sceptical opinions. What is, by general consent, the most valuable and comprehensive work on Christian theology and Church history which the last two generations of German divines have

[1] Science and Christian Tradition, pp. 263, 266.

produced? It is Herzog's 'Real-Encyclopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche,' of which the second edition, in eighteen large volumes, was completed about five years ago. But it is edited and written in harmony with the general belief of Protestant Christians. Who have done the chief exegetical work of the last two generations? On the rationalistic side, though not exclusively so, is the 'Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch,' in which, however, at the present time, Dillmann represents an opposition on an important point to the view of Wellhausen respecting the Pentateuch; but on the other side we have Meyer on the New Testament—almost the standard work on the subject—Keil and Delitzsch on the Old Testament and a great part of the New, Lange's immense 'Bibelwerk,' and the valuable 'Kurzgefasster Kommentar' on the whole Scripture, including the Apocrypha, now in course of publication under the editorship of Professors Strack and Zöckler. The Germans have more time for theoretical investigations than English theologians, who generally have a great deal of practical work to do; and German professors, in their numerous universities, compete against one another in the race for the greatest novelty. But it was by German theologians that Baur was

refuted; it is by German Hebraists like Strack that Wellhausen and Kuenen are now being best resisted.

When, in fact, Professor Huxley and Mrs Ward would leave an impression that, because German theological chairs are not shackled by articles like our own, therefore the best German thought and criticism is on the rationalistic side, they are conveying an entirely prejudiced representation of the facts. The effect of the German system is to make everything an open question—as though there were no such thing as a settled system of the spiritual universe, and no established facts in Christian history—and thus to enable any man of great ability, with a sceptical turn, to unsettle a generation and leave the edifice of belief to be built up again. But the edifice is, none the less, built up again, and Germans take as large a part in rebuilding it as in undermining it. Because Professor Huxley and Mrs Ward can quote great German names on one side, let it not be forgotten that just as able German names can be quoted on the other side. Take, for instance, Harnack, to whom Mrs Ward appeals, and whose 'History of Dogmas' Professor Huxley quotes. Harnack himself, in reviewing the history of his science, pays an honourable tribute to the late eminent divine Thomasius,

whose 'History of Dogmas' was recently republished after his death, and who wrote in the devoutest spirit of the Lutheran communion. Of course Harnack regards his point of view as narrow and unsatisfactory; but he adds that "equally great are the valuable qualities of this work in particular, in regard of its exemplarily clear exposition, its eminent learning, and the author's living comprehension of religious problems." A man who studies the history of Christian theology in Harnack without reference to Thomasius will do no justice to his subject.

But, says Mrs Ward, there is no real historical apprehension in the orthodox writers, whether of Germany or England, and the whole problem is one of "historical translation." Every statement, every apparent miracle, everything different from daily experience, must be translated into the language of that experience, or else we have not got real history. But this, it will be observed, under an ingenious disguise, is only the old method of assuming that nothing really miraculous can have happened, and that therefore everything which seems supernatural must be explained away into the natural. In other words, it is once more begging the whole question at issue. Mrs Ward accuses orthodox

writers of this fallacy; but it is really her own. Merriman is represented as saying that he learnt from his Oxford teachers that

> "it was imperatively right to endeavour to disentangle miracle from history, the marvellous from the real, in a document of the fourth, or third, or second century. . . . But the contents of the New Testament, however marvellous and however apparently akin to what surrounds them on either side, were to be treated from an entirely different point of view. In the one case there must be a desire on the part of the historian to discover the historical under the miraculous, or he would be failing in his duty as a sane and competent observer; in the other case there must be a desire, a strong 'affection,' on the part of the theologian, towards proving the miraculous to be historical, or he would be failing in his duty as a Christian." [1]

Mrs Ward has entirely mistaken the point of view of Christian science. Certainly if any occurrence, anywhere, can be explained by natural causes, there is a strong presumption that it ought to be so explained; for though a natural effect may be due in a given case to supernatural action, it is a fixed rule of philosophising, according to Newton, that we should not assume unknown causes when known ones suffice. But the whole case of the Christian reasoner is that the records of the New Testa-

[1] Nineteenth Century, March 1889, p. 457.

ment defy any attempt to explain them by natural causes. The German critics Hase, Strauss, Baur, Hausrath, Keim, all have made the attempt, and each, in the opinion of the others, and finally of Pfleiderer, has offered an insufficient solution of the problem. The case of the Christian is not that the evidence ought not to be explained naturally, and translated into everyday experience, but that it cannot be. But it is Mrs Ward who assumes beforehand that simply because the 'Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,' by that learned scholar and able writer, Dr Edersheim, whose recent loss is so much to be deplored, does not "translate" all the Gospel narratives into natural occurrences, therefore it is essentially bad history. The story has been the same throughout. The whole German critical school, from the venerable Karl Hase—and much as I differ from his conclusions, I cannot mention without a tribute of respect and gratitude the name of that great scholar, the veteran of all these controversies, whose 'Leben Jesu,' published several years before Strauss was heard of, is still perhaps the most valuable book of reference on the subject—all, from that eminent man downwards, have by their own repeated confession started from the assumption that the miraculous is impossible,

and that the Gospels must, by some device or other, be so interpreted as to explain it away. "Affection" there is and ought to be in orthodox writers for venerable, profound, and consoling beliefs; but they start from no such invincible prejudice, and they are pledged by their principles to accept whatever interpretation may be really most consonant with the facts.

I have only one word to say, finally, in reply to Professor Huxley. I am very glad to hear that he has always advocated the reading of the Bible, and the diffusion of its study among the people; but I must say that he goes to work in a very strange way in order to promote this result. If he could succeed in persuading people that the Gospels are untrustworthy collections of legends, made by unknown authors, that St Paul's Epistles were the writings of "a strange man," who had no sound capacity for judging of evidence, or, with Mrs Ward's friends, that the Pentateuch is a late forgery of Jewish scribes, I do not think the people at large would be likely to follow his well-meant exhortations. But I venture to remind him that the English Church has anticipated his anxiety in this matter. Three hundred years ago, by one of the greatest strokes of real government ever exhibited, the public reading of the whole Bible

was imposed upon Englishmen; and by the public reading of the Lessons on Sunday alone, the chief portions of the Bible, from first to last, have become stamped upon the minds of English-speaking people in a degree in which, as the Germans themselves acknowledge,[1] they are far behind us. He has too much reason for his lament over the melancholy spectacle presented by the intestine quarrels of Churchmen over matters of mere ceremonial. But when he argues from this that the clergy of our day "can have but little sympathy with the old evangelical doctrine of the 'open Bible,'" he might have remembered that our own generation of English divines has, by the labour of years, endeavoured at all events, whether successfully or not, to place the most correct version possible of the Holy Scriptures in the hands of the English people. I agree with him most cordially in seeing in the wide diffusion and the unpre-

[1] See the Preface to Riehm's well-known 'Dictionary of Biblical Antiquity,' first edition, 1877, where it is said: "German evangelical theology may, indeed, always claim the honour of being the pioneer and guide of the theologians of other nations in the scientific and learned investigation of the Bible. But this has been of little benefit to our own German national culture. Knowledge and understanding of the Bible, which constitute so essential an element of religious culture, remain its altogether weakest side. In this respect we Germans stand, for instance, far behind the English." This passage is reprinted in the second edition, 1893.

judiced study of that sacred volume the best security for "true religion and sound learning." It is in the open Bible of England, in the general familiarity of all classes of Englishmen and Englishwomen with it, that the chief obstacle has been found to the spread of the fantastic critical theories by which he is fascinated; and, instead of Englishmen translating the Bible into the language of their natural experiences, it will in the future, as in the past, translate them and their experiences into a higher and a supernatural region.

THE HISTORICAL CRITICISM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The following article, from the 'Quarterly Review' of October 1886, will furnish, it is hoped, some useful information on the results of modern criticism respecting the New Testament. Professor Huxley has warned his readers, in one of the articles to which the preceding papers are a reply, "against any reliance upon Dr Wace's statements as to the results arrived at by modern criticism," adding magisterially that "they are as gravely as surprisingly erroneous." The statements quoted in the following article, not only from Dr Salmon but from Dr Holtzmann, to whose authority Professor Huxley himself appeals, will enable the reader to estimate the justice of this warning, and to judge for himself of the state of the controversy. The following are the titles of the two works reviewed, the first being the standard English work on the subject, and the latter the standard German work from the rationalistic school:—

1. 'A Historical Introduction to the Study of the Books of the New Testament;' being an expansion of Lectures delivered in the Divinity School of the University of Dublin. By George Salmon, D.D., F.R.S., Regius Professor of Divinity. Second edition. London, 1886.

2. 'Lehrbuch der historisch-critischen Einleitung in das Neue Testament.' Von H. J. Holtzmann, Dr und ord. Professor der Theologie in Strassburg. Freiburg i. B., 1885.

Dr Salmon's 'Historical Introduction to the New Testament' is one of those remarkable books which can only be produced at rare intervals, and of which the importance depends on a singular combination in their subject-matter, their authorship, and the circumstances in which they appear. The subject-matter in this case is perhaps the most important which could claim attention in the present day, as it mainly concerns the authenticity and trustworthiness of some of the chief evidence on which our Christian faith is founded. That faith is not, indeed, wholly dependent on early documentary evidence, as it can appeal to broad historical facts in its support, above all to the continuous testimony of the Church and the Sacraments. But, at the same time, the documents which form the New Testament are practically indispensable to Christian faith, and an inquiry into their historical genuineness touches the very roots of our religion. At the present day this inquiry has assumed peculiar urgency, in consequence of circumstances presently to be noticed more particularly; and there is perhaps no question of greater practical import in the current controversy between Christianity and Infidelity. It is a question of the facts with which we have to deal, and unless this

preliminary point be in some measure settled, the great controversy can hardly be brought to a decisive issue.

It is of the utmost consequence that such an inquiry should be in hands which command full attention and confidence; and in this respect the volume before us answers the most stringent requirements which could be made. The name of Dr Salmon is of European reputation, and the weight it carries on the present subject is all the greater, because that reputation was originally gained in another field of labour. Dr Salmon's works have for many years been the standard treatises for advanced students in some of the highest branches of modern mathematical science. They still hold their ground, notwithstanding the great progress which has been made in the abstruse subjects of which some of them treat. They have been translated into two or three of the Continental languages; and the eminence they have won was marked, not long ago, by the election of their author to the rare distinction of a member of the French Institute. Dr Salmon's modesty has precluded him from recording this and similar distinctions on his title-page, and we suspect he would have found it difficult to make room for all of them, and that it was

easier to omit them than to make a selection. But we are glad to see that in his second edition he has not omitted to describe himself as a member of our own Royal Society; and it ought to be borne in mind, in reading this book, that its author had become one of the most eminent men of science of our day before he had begun to acquire similar eminence as a theologian.

That it is not necessary, indeed, as Professor Huxley seemed to suggest in his recent controversy with Mr Gladstone, to be a man of science in order to be capable of sound reasoning, is sufficiently shown by the examples of Bishop Butler and the late Bishop of Durham, to say nothing of the fact that there had been a great deal of good reasoning in the world before the foundation of the Royal Society. But considering the prevalent superstitious worship of science and its high priests, it must add to the attention a man can command if he is one of the initiated in this mystery. Dr Salmon speaks with full authority in this respect, and he is one of the most eminent of the many examples around us, including the present President of the Royal Society, that profound scientific knowledge is fully compatible with a devout faith in the creed of Christianity. But apart from the authority which in this respect his name

commands, the tone of his argument exhibits the best aspects of scientific thought. Two or three volumes of sermons, which he had previously published, were conspicuous examples of the introduction of this scientific tone into theological discussion. It is to be feared that this is one reason for their having attracted less attention than they deserve; for few people are attracted by simple statements of truth, and even our leading men of science would hardly command so wide an audience if they did not condescend to some of the arts of rhetoric. But the chief and almost unique characteristic of Dr Salmon's sermons is that they are a simple elucidation of truth. You start, as in some mathematical problem, from axioms so simple that they seem almost commonplaces, and are led on insensibly into the depths of some profound theological principle. There is nothing startling or even attractive about the opening methods of address; but before you are aware of it, you are convinced of some solemn truth of theology or religion. We hope Dr Salmon will be encouraged to give us some more of these sermons, for they are eminently calculated to influence and convince thoughtful minds at the present day.

These qualities, however, are peculiarly valu-

able in dealing with such a subject as that of the present volume, and they are not less conspicuously exhibited. By dint of persistent assertion, the opponents of Christian belief respecting the New Testament Scriptures have contrived to produce an impression, upon many minds, that its adherents or advocates are influenced by undue prejudice, and are incapable of judging scientifically of the questions at issue. The fact of which this impression is a perversion will be noticed in due course; and it will be seen that the real truth is, that the inveterate prejudice is on the part of the chief opponents of Christian tradition. But it is none the less valuable that the truth should be maintained, as in this volume, in a spirit which must impress every fair reader with the scientific calmness of the writer's spirit and method. "Although," says the author in his preface, "my work may be described as apologetic in the sense that its results agree in the main with the traditional belief of the Church, I can honestly say that I have not worked in the spirit of an advocate anxious to defend a foregone conclusion. I have aimed at making my investigations historical, and at asserting nothing but what the evidence, candidly weighed, seemed to warrant." The tone, no less than the method, of Dr Salmon's

argument fully sustains this claim, and engages from the outset the reader's confidence. One feels one's self in the hands of a quiet and masterly guide, who is only concerned to point out to us the facts with which we have to deal, and who will not press a single conclusion merely because it conforms to his own inclination or presumptions. On some secondary points, indeed, such as the date of the Apocalypse, his conclusions are more tentative than many would have wished; and sometimes we think he might well have been more decisive. But his reserve on these points is at least an illustration of the freedom and scientific character of his investigations, and adds weight to the decisive convictions to which he leads us on all points of importance. In discussing any question of criticism, Dr Salmon writes in just the same manner as if he were investigating a problem in conic sections or the higher algebra, except that his discussion is marked by grave suggestions, and occasionally by enlivening observations, for which a mathematical work, except in the hands of the late Professor De Morgan, affords no opportunities.

It must not be supposed, indeed, because the argument is conducted in this scientific spirit, that the volume is severe and difficult in style.

The circumstances under which it has been produced have combined with the author's natural genius to render it a delightful contrast to ordinary treatises on the subject — as, for instance, to the learned but somewhat dreary 'Lehrbuch' we have named with it at the beginning of this article, in which Dr Holtzmann presents the latest aspects of the school of criticism whose failure Dr Salmon exhibits. The book is an expansion of lectures delivered in the Divinity School of the University of Dublin, and is marked consequently by the directness, simplicity, and liveliness which such lectures naturally assume in such hands. Dr Salmon has done well to preserve the form of direct address in which they were cast, altering only the divisions necessitated by the length of oral lectures, and supplementing their contents. As the printing went on, he says, he found additions necessary, partly in order to take notice of things that had been published since the delivery of the lectures, and partly in order to include details which want of time had obliged him to omit, but which he was unwilling to pass unnoticed in his book. In this way the work has become a lively discussion of the historical question of the authorship and date of the whole New Testament; and a valuable lecture has been

added on early Non-Canonical books, including the recently discovered 'Teaching of the Twelve Apostles.' While meeting all the requirements of a scholar, the book is thus cast in a form which renders it attractive to the ordinary reader, and it should command the attention of thoughtful laymen as much as of scholars and divines. Dr Salmon, moreover, is richly endowed with the humour for which his countrymen were renowned before recent politics had clouded all Irish life with anxiety and bitterness, and his argument is constantly illustrated with humorous or witty passages. Such a capacity has its use in respect to the substance as well as to the style of such discussions; for it may be safely said that many a theory, English as well as German, noticed in these pages, would never have been propounded if its author had possessed a due perception of the ludicrous. There is a theory, for instance, respecting the Second Epistle of St Peter, propounded by Dr Abbott, which is exploded in these pages no less by the comic aspect in which it is placed than by the criticism with which it is exposed. So, again, in the following amusing description of the extent to which German and Dutch scepticism has gone, it is presented in a light which alone is sufficient to exhibit its unsoundness :—

"Baur," says Dr Salmon (p. 379), "is far from marking the lowest point of negative criticism. He found disciples who bettered his instruction, until it became as hard for a young professor, anxious to gain a reputation for ingenuity, to make a new assault on a New Testament book, as it is now for an Alpine Club man to find in Switzerland a virgin peak to climb. The consequence has been that, in Holland, Scholten and others, who had been counted as leaders in the school of destructive criticism, have been obliged to come out in the character of Conservatives, striving to prove, in opposition to Loman, that there really did live such a person as Jesus of Nazareth, and that it is not true that every one of the Epistles ascribed to Paul is a forgery. And certainly it is not only to the orthodox that the doctrine that we have no genuine remains of Paul is inconvenient; it must also embarrass those who look for arguments to prove an Epistle to be un-Pauline. I leave these last to fight the battle with their more advanced brethren. . . . Let me say this, however, that I think young critics have been seduced into false tracks by the reputation which has been wrongly gained by the display of ingenuity in finding some new reason for doubting received opinions. A man is just as bad a critic who rejects what is genuine as who receives what is spurious. 'Be ye good money-changers' is a maxim which I have already told you was early applied to this subject. But if a bank clerk would be unfit for his work who allowed himself easily to be imposed upon by forged paper, he would be equally useless to his employers if he habitually pronounced every note which was tendered to him to be a forgery, every sovereign to be base metal. I quite

disbelieve that the early Christian Church was so taken possession of by forgers that almost all its genuine remains were corrupted or lost, while the spurious formed the great bulk of what was thought worth preserving. The suspicions that have been expressed seem to me to pass the bounds of literary sanity. There are rogues in this world, and you do well to guard against them; but if you allow your mind to be poisoned by suspicion, and take every man for a rogue, why, the rogues will conspire against you, and lock you up in a lunatic asylum."

But there are also circumstances which render the appearance of Dr Salmon's book peculiarly opportune. There are many indications that we have reached a period when the results of modern criticism respecting the New Testament Scriptures may be fairly summed up. M. Renan's notorious work on the 'Origins of Christianity' implies in great measure this assumption. It exhibits the conviction of a keen, and in some respects sagacious, observer, that the great critical debate which has raged for so long in Germany is practically exhausted, and that the time has come for estimating its effect. Symptoms of the same feeling in Germany itself may be discerned in various publications, of which the object is to present a comprehensive view of the present position of critical investigations in all branches of theology. Four

years ago we noticed in these pages the appearance of a valuable work of this character, under the title of a 'Handbook of the Theological Sciences,' edited by Professor Zöckler, of Greifswald, and it has since reached a second edition.[1] In four handsome volumes it gives a useful survey of the whole field of theological learning from the point of view of moderate orthodoxy. This has been followed by the commencement of a series of Theological Handbooks, which are apparently intended to afford at once a more complete and more independent review of the present state of theological science. The prospectus states that the series is designed to serve no party interests, and is not a compilation written from the point of view of a particular party, but that each Handbook stands independently on its own ground. The authors, who are recognised leaders in their own departments, propose to furnish strictly scientific works, which will give the reader as "objective" an account as possible of the present position of the various branches of theology. Three volumes have already appeared,[2]—one by Professor Harnack, on the 'Early History of Christian Dogmas,' one by Professor Weizsäcker, on the 'History of the

[1] Since, in 1893, a third.

[2] The series now comprises many volumes.

Apostolic Age,' and the volume by Professor Holtzmann, named at the beginning of this article. The latter work was the first to be published; and both from the character of the series which it opens, and from its own nature, it has a special interest in respect to our present subject.

Dr Holtzmann, as he mentions in his preface, had for twenty-seven years lectured on the subjects included in an Introduction to the New Testament, and he stands perhaps at the head of German scholars in this department of theological learning. In the useful annual 'Review of Theological Publications,' founded by Professor Pünjer, and afterwards edited by Professor Lipsius, he contributes the account of the literature relating to the New Testament; and in the important 'Theological Journal,' edited by Professors Harnack and Schürer, he reviewed in 1885 the first edition of Dr Salmon's book. In the preface to his Introduction he describes it as his object to furnish a work which would afford a comprehensive survey of the present state of critical questions, and at the same time supply with sufficient completeness the subject-matter of controversy. His own point of view, which is decidedly rationalistic, is not disguised, but he has endeavoured to subordinate the ex-

pression of it to the purpose of giving a fair statement of every other view which has any scientific foundation. A rationalistic writer is too often disqualified, by the barrenness of his religious sympathies, from entering fully into the views of writers who are in harmony with the general course of Christian feeling; but so far as he understands them, such a writer is often, especially in Germany, free from any bias in reporting them. He looks on them with cool scientific eyes, and is under little inclination to give a distorted account of them. When a man has abandoned old beliefs, he seems sometimes afflicted with a peculiar incapacity to look at them fairly, and consciously or unconsciously he gives them a twist which may serve to excuse him for rejecting them. This seems to us a special temptation of English rationalists. But a writer like Dr Holtzmann is fairly free from any tendency of this kind. His essential fault, in which he is a marked representative of his school, is that his judgment is cold and mechanical. But he reviews the whole course of critical controversy with severe and unmoved temper, and is perfectly undisturbed amidst the most vital processes of dissection. He recognises that we have reached a time at which it is possible to estimate to a considerable degree the issue

of the long critical debate; and for the purpose of forming such an estimate his Introduction is a valuable work of reference.

It will thus be seen, however, that Dr Salmon's book appears at a time which, alike abroad and at home, is felt to be a favourable one for a judicial review of the great controversy in question. The late Bishop of Durham, in the preface to his great work on the Ignatian Epistles, expressed the belief that the destructive criticism of the last half-century is fast spending its force. To some extent, as will be seen in the sequel, Dr Salmon may be thought to be slaying the slain in his exposure of such theories as that of Baur. But it may be as well that such a *coup de grâce* should have been delayed until every plea that could be urged in support of the hypothesis had practically been exhausted. English divines have been sometimes reproached during the last half-century with paying insufficient attention to the attacks made by critical science upon traditional beliefs; and they were perhaps somewhat tardy in this respect. When, indeed, full notice was taken of such controversies, as in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' it received very inadequate attention; and even Dr Holtzmann, in his comprehensive survey of the literature of his subject, pays no regard to

the many important discussions contained in the Introductions to the New Testament Books in that Commentary. But the position assumed by English divines was very intelligible and excusable. They were like men who felt themselves in possession of an impregnable fortress, in the walls of which a disorganised host were striving, amidst the greatest confusion, to effect a practicable breach. It was not worth while, as long as partial and inconsistent assaults were being delivered, now on one side and now on the other, to bring all the forces of learning to bear on each attempt, especially as the attack of one set of assailants was sure to be neutralised by a counter-movement on the part of some rivals or other. But the attack, as Bishop Lightfoot says, has now in great part spent its force, and the real value of each ambitious enterprise can be judged of. It is a great advantage that at such a time a book should be placed in the hands of English readers which pronounces a fair, comprehensive, and solid judgment upon the whole controversy. The publication, almost simultaneously, of Dr Holtzmann's book, enables us to check at each point the statements of fact and opinion which Dr Salmon advances, and thus secures us against any such danger of prejudice as even the most impartial writer may not al-

ways be able to escape. The result appears to us to afford a most remarkable confirmation of the truth of the views substantially held in the Church from the commencement, and at the same time to suggest most instructive considerations respecting other controversies still pending.

It may, perhaps, be worth observing that Dr Holtzmann has borne conspicuous, though reluctant, testimony to the full acquaintance which Dr Salmon commands with the course of German criticism. In the review in 'Schürer's Journal,' to which we have referred, he expresses a not unnatural vexation at Dr Salmon's merciless, though by no means unkind, exposure of some leading schools of German criticism; but in complaining of what he describes as its misrepresentations, he has to confess that it is in perfect harmony with the views expressed in the most widely read journals and reviews in Germany itself.

"It is," he says, "some excuse for a foreigner who entertains his readers with such frivolous wit that his views are evidently obtained in very limited degree from his own study of German theology, and that for the rest he relies upon the judgments which are at present current and familiar in Germany itself. The journals and theological papers which are most read among us speak much the same language as he does; and, in fact, in strong contrast to the picture of Ger-

man theology drawn by our author, they offer abundant examples that there is scarcely any contention of criticism, whether well-founded or not, which has not afforded some partisan of the prevalent Church influences an occasion to spring into the saddle as the champion of traditional prejudice." [1]

This passage is interesting, in the testimony it affords of the strong reaction which prevails in Germany itself against the destructive school of criticism—a reaction which is full of encouragement for the future of religious thought and life, alike in that important country and elsewhere. But with respect to the insinuation against Dr Salmon, that his view of the criticism he exposes is but partially derived from direct study of its sources, it seems an unfortunate argument that Dr Salmon's account of it is in entire harmony with that of the most widely read theological papers in Germany itself. The fact is that Dr Salmon has taken particular pains throughout his work to deal directly and at first hand with all the German authors whom he quotes, and useful information respecting each of them is added in footnotes. It is an essential characteristic of his work that it is in no respect a compilation. No authority, ancient or modern, is employed without careful sifting, and the results presented

[1] Theologische Literaturzeitung, August 22, 1885, p. 399.

are always independent and original, and sometimes novel. Dr Holtzmann himself, however, is obliged to part from Dr Salmon with some genial acknowledgments; and if there is something amusing in the condescension with which he confesses that he—even he—has learnt something from a professor at Dublin, we have chiefly to regret that what he has failed to learn is the secret of the liveliness and humour which he cannot help enjoying.

"And yet," he says (p. 400 of the Review), "it is no uninteresting book which the Dublin theologian offers us. In spite of its lack of compactness and division of subject-matter, it is enlivened by a certain freshness of conception, by humour and wit, and by a wealth of illustration which a wide historical knowledge and great acquaintance with English and French literature place at the writer's command. Even the special theological learning of the author, in spite of the limits already indicated to his judgment, is in no way to be lightly estimated. On not a few points I am indebted to the author for additions to my knowledge, and that not merely in respect to subjects which, from his Dublin point of view, are of more concern to him, and more accessible to him, than to myself."

In the twelfth number of the same Review for the current year, in an article on Dr Westcott's 'Commentary on St John's Epistles,' the editor, Dr Harnack, said that "among German commentaries on the writings of the New Testament

we possess few which, for richness of material, penetrating acumen, and independence of judgment, can be compared with this commentary of Westcott's. The exegetical works of this scholar and of Lightfoot may serve us for a model." When English theological scholarship commands this recognition in the same columns as Dr Holtzmann's article, there is something almost comical in his surprise at Dr Salmon's learning. But we are sure that Dr Salmon will cheerfully accept the condescension, for the sake of the substantial testimony which it implies to the value of his book.

We are quite content, however, for our present purpose, to accept Dr Holtzmann's invitation, in the same article, to follow him in a review of the course of German criticism, instead of judging it simply in the light of the English method as represented by Dr Salmon's book. This review occupies the central part of Dr Holtzmann's 'Einleitung,' and is peculiarly instructive. The title of the chapter in question is "The Canon and Protestantism," and it is characteristic of his whole point of view, that the Canon appears to present itself to him as a kind of bugbear which it is the first duty of a sound critic to exorcise. There is indeed some truth in his contention, that there was a signal incon-

sistency in the manner in which some schools of Protestant theology, while renouncing the traditional authority of the Roman Church, rested their case on another tradition, that of the Canon, which they accepted almost blindfold. It was peculiarly the temptation of those Protestant Churches which were forced adrift from the historical continuity of Church order and life. Their break with the past in external organisation and succession was so marked that they were led to throw exaggerated emphasis on the independent authority of the Scriptures. In this country, where the sense of historic continuity was never broken, such exaggeration of the place held by the Canon has been but partial, and our best divines have maintained a position more in harmony with that of the early Fathers, and in keeping with the statement of our article, that the Church is "a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ." Such a position justifies an inquiry at any moment into the nature of the witness borne by the Church from the earliest times, and practically rests the authority of the Canon upon the broad ground of historic fact. At the background of Professor Holtzmann's whole discussion there seems a notion that this simple view of the case is almost beyond the conception of his antagonists. He seems to imagine that

he has to contend with people who regard the recognised Canon as determined for them once for all by some unknown dogmatic authority, so that it is their business henceforth never to look behind it, but simply to invent arguments, good or bad, in favour of its retention.

The presence of such a spectre in the mind of a theological scholar like Professor Holtzmann may go far to explain some of the extravagances of German speculation. To get rid of this artificial authority, German scholars have rushed to another extreme, and have found a delight in trying how completely they could emancipate themselves from dogmatic fetters. The progress of human thought exhibits a curious incapacity for straightforward progression. A straight line is said not to exist in nature, and it certainly does not exist in the history of thought. Men never advance from one centre of truth to its neighbour by the direct path, but by a series of zigzags, in which they swerve alternately from the right to the left. The ascent, we must suppose, is too difficult, or the distant truth too dazzling; but whatever the reason, this incapacity for direct progression is almost universal. Professor Holtzmann's discussion leaves the impression that his chief impulse is one of repulsion from the old dogmatic theory he

denounces, and that the criticism in which he seeks a refuge is swinging wildly right and left, in search of the balance in which it will ultimately rest. Perverse as have been some of the aberrations of this criticism, we must own to a partial sympathy with its efforts. The German critics sometimes seem to us like bold riders in a hunting-field, repelled by the dictation of an arbitrary huntsman that they must all ride in one direction, if they are to find the fox. He may be quite right, but he is irritating in his manner, and they are provoked into jumping impossible fences all round the field, in order to prove that the fox has gone elsewhere. They tumble into sad ditches, and find out that the huntsman was right after all. But the result is at all events to make it quite certain that the fox did go off in the direction that the huntsman maintained; and as to the reckless riders, we may hope "that heaven may yet have more mercy than man on such a bold rider's soul."

However, though Dr Holtzmann need not make quite so much of the achievement, it was a perfectly legitimate and even necessary step that when, in the eighteenth century, the struggle for existence against the Roman Church was over, and the materials for learned investi-

gation became fully accessible, German critics, of whom perhaps Semler, who died in 1791, is the pioneer, should commence to scrutinise more closely the grounds on which the sacred books of our Canon held their authoritative position. They were as much open to free inquiry as the Papal authority to which our forefathers had submitted, and they had to stand the test of reason and history if they were to maintain their claims. There was, indeed, one essential point on which German criticism from the first went astray. Dr Holtzmann quotes as a characteristic mark of advance the saying of Eichhorn, at the beginning of this century, that the "writings of the New Testament must be read in a human way and examined in a human way." This may be understood in a sound meaning, but Dr Holtzmann immediately emphasises the error to which it was exposed when he adds, in his own name, that "their origin and their collection were alike a human process." This is to beg the question in the most extravagant manner. Eichhorn says that we must examine the Scriptures by human faculties and by human methods. It certainly does not follow, as Dr Holtzmann assumes, that we shall find none but human forces at work. The verdict of reason may be, that it has come

into contact with something beyond and above reason; but this is a possibility which it has been the grand error of German criticism to ignore. Dr Salmon has some excellent remarks on this point in his opening chapter. The question of inspiration is of course the question of miracle, and the impossibility of miracle became the first principle of the leading schools of German criticism.

"This principle," says Dr Salmon (p. 8)—"namely, the absolute impossibility of miracle—is the basis of the investigations of the school, some of whose results must be examined in this course of lectures. Two of its leading writers, Strauss and Renan, in their prefaces, make the absolute rejection of the supernatural the foundation of their whole structure. Renan declares that he will accept a miracle as proved only if it is found that it will succeed on repetition, forgetting that in this case it would not be a miracle at all, but a newly discovered natural law. Strauss equally, in his preface, declares it to be his fundamental principle that there was nothing supernatural in the person or work of Jesus. The same thing may be said about a book which made some sensation on its publication a few years ago, 'Supernatural Religion.' The extreme captiousness of its criticism found no approval from respectable foreign reviewers, however little they might be entitled to be classed as believers in Revelation. Dates were assigned in it to some of our New Testament books so late as to shock any one who makes an attempt fairly to judge of evidence. And the

reason is, that the author starts with the denial of the supernatural as his fixed principle. If that principle be, in his eyes, once threatened, all ordinary laws of probability must give way. It is necessary at the outset to call your attention to this fundamental principle of our opponents, because it explains their seeming want of candour; why it is that they are so unreasonably rigorous in their demands of proof of the authenticity of our books; why they meet with evasions proofs that seem to be demonstrative. It is because, to their minds, any solution of a difficulty is more probable than one which would concede that a miracle had really occurred."

It is the same unfounded assumption, in another aspect, which is involved in Dr Holtzmann's comment on Eichhorn's maxim, and is at the root of the mistaken criticism of which he is the present representative. It is assumed that every phenomenon in the New Testament must be explained on purely human principles, and without reference to the possibility of the minds of the sacred writers having been supernaturally influenced. This principle, however, did not receive its full development until the appearance of Strauss's 'Life of Jesus' in 1835. De Wette, who died in 1849, affords, says Dr Holtzmann, "a speaking mirror of the young and unsettled criticism of the period immediately before and after 1840," and "he shows, in his own example, how, with full critical tendency,

it was possible in the main to arrive at results which appear readily reconcilable with traditional conceptions" (p. 182). In fact, like some of the Fathers in the early Church, De Wette entertained doubts respecting the authenticity of certain books in the Canon; but on this subject, in Dr Holtzmann's opinion, he represents no general revolt against traditional views. The real commencement of the kind of criticism which occasioned the chief controversies of the last half-century is regarded by Dr Holtzmann as marked by the publication of Strauss's 'Life of Jesus.' This work, with its portentous design of revolutionising the whole conception of Christianity, indicates the growing feeling of rationalistic thought that it could do nothing by merely nibbling, as it were, at particular portions of the Canon or of Christian traditions. Those traditions were felt to form too strong and compact a body of organised thought and life to be seriously affected by a few doubts on points of detail. If the sacred documents were trustworthy on the whole, it was felt, especially by Strauss, that the characteristic elements of Christian belief, and particularly the reality of miracles, could not be seriously contested. But, as Dr Salmon says, the reality of such beliefs was assumed to be impossible, and the rational-

istic genius of the day, stimulated by the current philosophy, was brooding over the problem of finding some natural explanation of the whole phenomenon of the New Testament literature. Strauss's attempt commanded attention, and exerted considerable fascination by its audacity; but it was felt, as Dr Holtzmann says, even by those who were in sympathy with its object, that it dealt too recklessly with the broad and unquestionable evidence of fact, afforded not merely by the Gospels, but by other books of the New Testament.

But while rationalistic thought was in the ferment thus created, Ferdinand Christian Baur was elaborating a theory which, while answering the main purposes of that of Strauss, appeared to possess the documentary basis in which the latter had been deficient; and this theory took by storm the public to which it appealed. A review of it is made the starting-point of Dr Salmon's book, and the position which he gives it is in harmony with that assigned to it by Dr Holtzmann. Their accounts of it are substantially the same, but to avoid all appearance of partiality we will take Dr Holtzmann's. The theory marks, for several reasons, a memorable episode in the history of criticism; and it is only necessary to apprehend the facts which relate to

it, as they are stated by one who is an admirer, and in great degree the disciple, of its founder, in order to appreciate the vivid illustration it affords of the points on which we are chiefly concerned to dwell. The following is Dr Holtzmann's account of the origin of this famous theory; and we must beg the reader to bear in mind that it is an account given, not by a hostile critic, but by an ardent admirer:—

"The founder of the Tübingen school, F. C. Baur (who died in 1860), had taken his point of departure not so much, like Strauss, from Philosophy, as from History; and before Strauss had entered on the criticism of the Gospels, Baur had commenced the criticism of the New Testament from the other central point, examining in the Epistles of St Paul the most direct and ancient records of Christianity. He had been led to them in the course of his study of Gnosticism, through his researches into the Homilies ascribed to the Roman Clement. In these Homilies he thought he discovered an abrupt opposition between Jewish and Pauline Christianity, in respect to which it was not easy to see how it could have been less in the preceding apostolic age. He investigated, accordingly, with more exactness the relation of St Paul to the elder apostles, and found that the conception generally entertained of the apostolic age was a false one. It could in no way have been that golden age of undisturbed harmony which it was generally represented. On the contrary, the utterances of Paul himself afforded clear proof of deep oppositions, and of vital struggles

which that apostle had to maintain with the Jewish Christian party, and even with the older apostles. There was thus gained, at all events, a more concrete view of the import of the first vital controversy of Christianity, of its relation to Judaism, and of the modifications which it experienced in its passage to a heathen soil."

A stranger method of gaining an insight into the history of early Christianity could hardly be conceived. It will be observed that Baur's theory was not suggested to him by the study of the New Testament writings themselves—not even by those four Epistles of St Paul which he afterwards selected as the documentary basis of his system. It was suggested to him by the Clementine Homilies. These Homilies, as Dr Salmon explains, are not older than the very end of the second century. They are a kind of Christian romance, of which Clement of Rome is made the narrator. They are generally believed to have originated among a later sect of Ebionites, or Jewish Christian heretics, and they form a sort of controversial novel, in which St Peter is represented as the Apostle of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, and St Paul is ignored, or even attacked, under the disguise of Simon Magus. Baur is struck, in this heretical romance, with the bitter feeling against St Paul entertained by the sect in which it arose; and, in Dr

Holtzmann's words, "does not see how this feeling could have been less in the apostolic age." That is to say, he does not see any improbability in reading back into the main current of apostolic thought the feelings which he finds cherished, about a hundred and fifty years later, in an obscure corner of the Christian world. The views and prejudices of Ebionite writers towards the end of the second century must, he assumes, have been those which animated apostles in the middle of the first. The theory is purely arbitrary. Not only was it not suggested by the Epistles of St Paul, but it had to be forcibly read into them. Accordingly, those which will not bear the strain are summarily rejected as not genuine, and the whole New Testament is judged by a standard taken from a confessedly fanciful, as well as heretical, novel of a late date. The natural consequence is well described by Dr Salmon as follows (p. 20):—

"In order to save his theory from destruction, Baur has been obliged to make a tolerably clean sweep of the documents. In four of Paul's Epistles some symptoms may be found which can be interpreted as exhibiting feelings of jealousy or soreness towards the elder apostles. But there is nothing of the kind in the other nine. The genuineness of these, therefore, must be denied. The Acts of the Apostles represent Paul

as on most friendly terms with Peter and James, and these apostles as taking his side in the controversy as to imposing Judaism on the Gentiles. The Acts, therefore, cannot be true history. Not only the discourses ascribed to Peter in the Acts, but the first Epistle, which the ancient Church unanimously accepted as Peter's, is thoroughly Pauline in doctrine. We must therefore disregard ancient testimony, and reject the Epistle. The earliest uninspired Christian document, the Epistle of Clement of Rome, confessedly belongs to the conciliatory school, Peter and Paul being placed in it on equal terms of reverence and honour. It, too, must be discarded. So, in like manner, go the Epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp, the former of whom writes to the Romans, 'I do not pretend to command you, like Peter or Paul.'"

It is to be further borne in mind, however, that Baur prided himself on what he described as the "positive" character of this criticism, as distinguished from such negative criticism as that of De Wette. The criticism of his predecessors had, as it were, but picked holes in the old edifice of early Church history, leaving the main outlines of the old structure still standing. But Baur aspired to nothing less than a reconstruction of the whole building. He maintained that the Catholic Church of the latter part of the second century, instead of having grown up regularly on the lines traced out for it by the common teaching of the apostles, was the result

of a compromise between two radically antagonistic parties—those of Judaism and Paulinism, or what Dr Holtzmann distinguishes as "a particularistic and universalistic conception of Christianity, the one legal, the other free." The Canonical and non-Canonical literature of early Christianity is all interpreted as consisting of memorials of this long struggle, which is supposed to have lasted till towards the end of the second century, and as marking the gradual stages of approach to an agreement. For the purpose of promoting a compromise, epistles and historical books were written which cast over Apostolic history a colour of harmony which did not really exist, and the names of Apostles and their companions were without scruple attached to such productions. This period of literary development was regarded as falling into three divisions. The first extended to the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70, and included the four Epistles of St Paul which alone Baur reckoned as genuine, with the Apocalypse of St John. In these the original Ebionitic Christianity and Paulinism confronted each other in their full extent. The second period extends over the next seventy years, or until about 140 A.D.; and includes the origin of the two great Gospels of St Matthew and St Luke, which refer to the Jewish war

under Hadrian, or to the years 132-135 A.D. To the same period belong the Acts of the Apostles and St Mark, with the Epistle to the Hebrews, the supposed pseudo-Pauline Epistles, and the Catholic Epistles. The characteristic of this period was said to be that the first step was taken on both sides towards softening the original antagonism, the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians being invented for this purpose on the side of the Pauline party. Finally, in the third period, after 140, the conflicting Ebionitic and Gnostic extremes were rejected by the general feeling of the Church, and a final settlement of the controversy was arrived at, which is marked in practice at Rome by the association of "Peter and Paul" as joint founders of that Church, and in thought by the fourth Gospel. To this last period, accordingly, are assigned the writings which conclude the Canon —the Pastoral Epistles, and the Gospel and Epistles of St John.

It might naturally be asked, What is the use of recalling so preposterous a theory, especially when, as we shall see, it is practically abandoned even by those who, like Dr Holtzmann, look up to its author with admiration, and regard themselves as his successors? It possesses, however, one aspect of great practical interest and impor-

tance, upon which it is our main purpose at present to dwell. This theory of Baur—as great a romance as the Clementine Homilies on which it is built—does not stand by itself, like the theory of Strauss, as the dream of a single mind, which passed away with its author. It became the foundation of an important school of German learning which to some extent still exists; and Baur is still looked up to as a great master by a band of able men who regard themselves as his followers, though they have been obliged, by the force of evidence, to relinquish his main positions. The theory seized a large part of the German critical and theological world by storm, and a band of impetuous critics attached themselves to their *Meister*, and worked out his theory into the minutest and most extravagant details. Dr Salmon gives one of the strangest of these fantastic discoveries, which we observe that even Dr Holtzmann still mentions with respect:—

"St Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount makes our Lord speak of men who say 'Lord, Lord,' and who will, at the last day, appeal . . . to their doing of miracles in the name of Jesus, but who will be rejected by Him as doers of lawlessness (*ἀνομία*), whom He had never known. It may surprise you to hear that this sentence was coined by the Jewish-Christian author of the record as a protest against the opposition

to the law made by Paul and his followers. And it may surprise you more to hear that St Luke (xiii. 26) is highly complimented for the skill with which he turns this Jewish anti-Pauline saying into one of a Pauline anti-Jewish character. He substitutes the word *ἀδικία*, 'injustice,' for *ἀνομία*, 'lawlessness,' and he directs the saying against the Jews, who will one day appeal to having eaten and drunk in the presence of Jesus, and to His having taught in their streets, but, notwithstanding, shall be told by Him to depart as doers, not of *ἀνομία*, but of iniquity, and shall break forth into loud weeping when they see people coming from the east and west, and north and south, and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while themselves are shut out."

One would think that people must have gone crazy over a theory before they could magnify such a microscopic variation into a serious illustration and support of their views.

But notwithstanding the original wildness of the theory, and the extravagance of some of its supporters, it still maintained such a place in German thought as to be treated by Dr Holtzmann as the starting-point of subsequent criticism, to which all other schools are to be referred. He proceeds, in detailing the further course of criticism down to the present day, to describe it as a series of stages in the development of Baur's theory, or in opposition to it. Practically, however, his narrative is simply a record of the manner in

which the main points of the theory were found, one by one, to be untenable. Dr Hilgenfeld, for instance, who is described as remaining true to the critical views of the Tübingen school in the wider sense, and who is one of its ablest representatives, is nevertheless described as recognising "that original Christianity did not consist of pure Ebionism, and that in the relation of Paul to the original apostles their common ground must not be overlooked; while to the four Epistles acknowledged by Baur three must be added as genuine, Thessalonians I., Philippians, and Philemon." But passing to the opponents of the school, we are introduced first to the "imaginative opposition," connected with the great name of Neander, which based its antagonism on Christian conviction and feeling, and dwelt on the immense gulf which separates the sacred writings of the Canon from the uninspired literature with which Baur's theory would class so many of them. Then follows the "dogmatic opposition," of which Von Hofmann in the past, and Dr Bernhard Weiss in the present, are taken as representatives, and which starts from the assumption that the development of the Church must have been due, not to the action and reaction of contraries, but to the unfolding of an inherent unity. Then finally follows the

"methodical opposition," represented by Reuss, Ewald, the venerable Church historian Karl Hase, and above all Ritschl, which meets Baur's contention by a fresh investigation, and a juster presentation, of the facts which he had perverted. Ritschl, for example, showed that, as Dr Salmon observes, a more careful examination of the Clementines shows that they did not emanate from the party which opposed St Paul in his lifetime. According to Dr Holtzmann's account of Ritschl's argument, "there arose, after the destruction of Jerusalem, an Essene Jewish Christianity, which Baur, in the course of his investigations into the Clementines, falsely conceived as a potent influence reaching back to the first apostolic Christianity." In other words, Baur not only endeavoured to reconstruct early Christianity by the light of a heretical romance of the end of the second century, but he misunderstood the very point in this romance on which his whole edifice rested.

What is the result at the present moment? We have mentioned the views which Baur maintained as to the date of most of our New Testament books, and it will be sufficient to compare them with the judgments pronounced by Dr Holtzmann, who, as we have seen, is sufficiently disposed to follow "the master." It is not always

easy to ascertain Dr Holtzmann's precise views, for it is at once an advantage in his book that he in great measure endeavours to describe the views of others, and a disappointment that he so often reserves his own opinion. But enough may be gathered for our present purpose. First of all, as to St Paul's Epistles, he not only acknowledges the genuineness of Baur's four, but admits (p. 96) that the letters to the Thessalonians were written before the contest respecting the Law had commenced, and he appears also to recognise the Epistle to the Philippians, the Epistle to Philemon, and a portion, at all events, of the Epistle to the Colossians. His theory about the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians is, indeed, an extraordinary instance of the fanciful inventions which German critics are capable of indulging. These last Epistles present, as the reader will remember, a remarkable series of parallel expressions, doubtless owing to their being written about the same time for a similar purpose. But this is too simple an explanation to satisfy a critic like Dr Holtzmann, and his theory is, that there was an original Epistle of St Paul, now embedded, amidst interpolations, in the Epistle to the Colossians. Some ingenious writer made use of this as the basis on which to compose the Epistle to the Ephesians as it now stands. But when he

had accomplished this forgery, he was so pleased with his handiwork that he thought a little of the same kind of development would improve the original Epistle. So he worked this up into a shape more resembling his own handiwork in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and the result was the present Epistle to the Colossians. We must suppose, since Dr Holtzmann deems such a process possible, that it would be practicable to a German critic ; but apart from other absurdities, which we will presently refer to, such an elaborate piece of mosaic forgery is inconceivable in any other quarter. However, with these admissions with respect to the Pauline Epistles, a great part of Baur's theory is already gone.

With respect to the first three Gospels and the Acts, Dr Holtzmann acknowledges that the identity of the author of St Luke's Gospel and of the Acts "stands perfectly firm." Moreover, he concludes that the author of the account of St Paul's voyage to Rome at the close of the Acts is St Luke himself; and though he struggles to escape from the consequences which this involves respecting both the whole of the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel of St Luke, the admission is practically decisive of the value of those two documents as records of apostolic tradition. There has been, again, a vast amount

of controversy respecting the brief reference which Eusebius has preserved from Papias to the writings of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. But Dr Holtzmann, no less than Dr Salmon, admits (p. 114) that "Papias certainly knew our synoptic Gospels, even if not under their present titles." This, of course, renders it impracticable for him to place our first two Gospels later than the time of the Flavian Cæsars—that is, the last thirty years of the first century—St Luke and the Acts immediately following them; and his chief reason for putting them so late as this appears to be his assumption, that because they refer to the fall of Jerusalem, they must have been composed after that event; prophecy, on the arbitrary principle of which Dr Salmon has exposed the unreasonableness, being assumed to be impossible. But what a mass of pretentious speculation, from Baur downwards, falls to the ground when it is thus admitted, even by one who is in great measure a disciple of that school, that the first two Gospels, at all events, are to be assigned to the first century, the third Gospel being, at the most, a little later, and great part of the Acts, at least, being contemporary with St Paul!

But the admissions are not less striking and decisive, when coming from such a quarter,

respecting the Gospel of St John. This Gospel, it will be remembered, was represented by Baur as marking the ideal side of that reconciliation between Paulinism and Petrinism which was definitely completed after A.D. 140; while the practical side is represented by that association of Peter and Paul, as joint-founders of the Roman Church, which is exhibited in the Epistle of Clement of Rome. But Dr Holtzmann (p. 110) gives A.D. 93 as the earliest possible date for Clement's Epistle, and 125 as the latest, assigning similar limits to the so-called Epistle of Barnabas. The reconciliation is complete, therefore, at Rome at the beginning of the first century at latest, and the whole ground is thus cut away from that long process of adjustment which Baur supposed to have gone forward throughout the second century. But we further find Dr Holtzmann admitting the existence in St Clement's Epistle of a series of apparent points of contact with St John's Gospel, and similar appearances in the Epistle of Barnabas. He does not acknowledge that this proves that these authors were actually in possession of St John's Gospel, but he concludes that they are associated with that Gospel and with the Epistles of St John "by a certain identity in the sphere of their conceptions, of contemporary sympathy, and of their

spiritual atmosphere. John is not quoted, but we are within the Johannine movement." Or, as he describes it, we are in a Johannine nebula, though the star of the fourth Gospel has not yet emerged. But he admits without reserve that the fourth Gospel was in the hands of Justin Martyr, who flourished about A.D. 150 (pp. 449-453). Now, as Christian tradition has always assigned the Gospel to the last years of St John's life—that is, to the very end of the first century—is there any common-sense in plunging into this nebulous hypothesis in order to explain the prevalence of Johannine ideas in Clement and Barnabas, and the definite, even if sparing, use of the Gospel by Justin Martyr? Dr Holtzmann, in short, admits the existence of phenomena, long and obstinately denied by critics, which are at once explained by one of the most direct and authoritative traditions in the Christian Church. To what can it be ascribed but to an "apologetic" tendency—with the sole difference that it is Baur, and not Christian tradition, for which the apology is offered—that he should still struggle against the obvious conclusion, that the old belief is the true one? As Dr Salmon points out, in some very just and important observations, when criticism attempts to draw these fine chronological limits, it is pal-

pably over-straining its resources, and is practically admitting the facts against which it has been struggling :—

"I must remark," he says (p. 118), "that the concessions which the later school of sceptical critics has been forced to make have evacuated the whole field in which critical science has a right to assert itself against tradition. We can well believe that there would be considerable difference between a document written in A.D. 60 and in 160; and therefore if the question were between two such dates, one who judged only by internal evidence might be justified in maintaining his opinion in opposition to external evidence. But now that all sober criticism has abandoned the extravagantly late dates which at one time were assigned to the Gospels, the difference between the contending parties becomes so small that mere criticism cannot without affectation pretend to be competent to give a decision. Take, for example, the difference between an orthodox critic, who is willing to believe that the fourth Gospel was written by the Apostle John in extreme old age, towards the end of the first century, and a sceptical critic of the moderate school, who is willing to allow it to have been written early in the second century. It seems to me that this difference is smaller than criticism can reasonably pronounce upon. For I count it unreasonable to say that it is credible a book should have been written eighty years after our Lord's death, and incredible it should have been written only sixty; when we have scarcely any documentary evidence as to the history of the Church, or the progress of Christian thought during the interval. So I think that the gradual

approaches which Baur's successors have been making to the traditional theory indicate that criticism will in the end find itself forced to acquiesce in the account of the origin of the Gospels which the Church has always received."

It appears to us that these simple but weighty observations mark the practical conclusion of the long and stormy critical debate we have been sketching. The reader will find in Dr Salmon's pages an interesting and candid guide in following the controversy on each book of the New Testament, and it would take us far beyond the limits of an article to follow him in detail. But having thus illustrated the general character and practical issue of the discussion, we are anxious to draw attention to one or two general considerations of importance which seem to arise from it. In the first place, it must be evident what practical significance arises from the mere fact of the collapse of the edifice which Baur erected amidst such excitement—an excitement of equal alarm on the one side and of applause on the other. We see one of the most ingenious, learned, and brilliant of German scholars devoting his lifetime to the elaboration of a theory of the origin of the Christian Church and of the Christian Scriptures, which was to take the place of traditional belief on the subject.

It was to supply a positive and historical account of these momentous events, which would remove them from the sphere of the miraculous and supernatural, and bring them within the circle of ordinary human experience. Instead of dissipating them at once, like Strauss, into a cloud of myths, or endeavouring, like the older rationalists, to minimise the miraculous elements in them, it was to show step by step how they arose, and to account for even the smallest details in their composition and expression. The attempt met the inclinations prompted by the dominant philosophy of the day in Germany, and was at once seized upon by a school of eager critics as the solution of the problem of Christianity. The primary assumptions of the school acquired in a short time the prestige of great critical discoveries, and in a few years more they began to be talked of in this country, by those who are in sympathy with the spirit by which they were originally prompted, as though they were the accepted results of German scholarship. Suggestions were insinuated in many lay circles that English divines and clergy were, from ignorance or self-interest, wedded to obsolete traditions, while a light was dawning on the Continent which would before long disperse the spectres of the ancient faith. Meanwhile

though the German scholars, with a conventionalism unworthy of their claims to candour, do their best to keep up the illusion of the greatness of the famous Tübingen school, the force of facts and of increasing evidence has been steadily compelling them not only to recede from particular positions maintained by Baur, but to recognise that his whole theory of early Church history is fallacious. One of the most striking illustrations of this result is afforded in a passage of Dr Holtzmann's summary of the present position of criticism. He says (p. 200) that

"Baur's successor in the Tübingen chair, Carl Weizsäcker, describes it as a prejudice to suppose that in the post-apostolic age there were only Paulinists and legalising Jewish-Christians, and points to the broad basis of Christian life, on which the struggle of principles was decided beforehand. He observes that the original apostles had never been specifically opponents of Paul, although, as they remained Jews, they maintained a provisional restriction; but Gentile Christianity was so much the more recognised by them, as it was by no means the exclusive creation of St Paul, but impulses towards it may be traced back to Barnabas and Apollos; and in places like Antioch and Rome communities free from obligation to the Jewish law had arisen without the action of Paul, forming a kind of uncultivated field of Gentile Christianity, for the occupation of which at a later date Paul and the Judaists alike could exert themselves."

Baur's successor discovering, at this time of day, that the post-apostolic Church was not entirely composed of two antagonistic parties of Paulinists and anti-Paulinists, and that the elder apostles were not direct antagonists of Paul, affords a stranger commentary on the history and fame of the Tübingen school than could have been dreamed of by its opponents.

But in view of these results, it is surely time for Englishmen of all schools to ask themselves what is the value to be placed upon a kind of criticism which has proved itself, in so conspicuous an instance, to be capable of such portentous errors. People have talked for some time past about German scholarship and German criticism as if it had some of the attributes of Papal infallibility, or as though, at all events, it should be treated with general deference and submission; and it turns out that the hypothesis which in recent times laid the chief claim to this respect started from a blunder, proceeded by shutting its eyes to facts, and ended in conclusions now proved to be preposterous. As we have already said, we entertain, in some respects, no ungenial feelings towards German critics; and, above all, we would guard ourselves against the hasty prejudice by which German theology and criticism, to which the world owes an incalcul-

able debt, is too frequently confounded, in a wholly unjust condemnation, with the rash speculations of particular schools and periods. Dr Salmon pays a just and generous tribute to the admirable labour and devotion which German critics of the sceptical school have bestowed on the books they would dethrone from their inspired authority.

"It is," he confesses (p. 129), "scarcely creditable to Christians that in recent years far more pains have been expended on the minute study of the New Testament writings by those who recognise in them no divine element, than by those who believe in their inspiration. In fact, their very belief in inspiration, fixing the thoughts of Christians on the divine author of the Bible, made them indifferent or even averse to a comparative examination of the work of the respective human authors of the sacred books. They were sure there could be no contradiction between them, and it was all one to their faith in what part of the Bible a statement was made, so that no practical object seemed to be gained by inquiring whether or not what was said by Matthew was said also by Mark. In modern times the study of the New Testament has been taken up by critics who, far from shutting their eyes to discrepancies, are eager to magnify into a contradiction the smallest indication they can discover of opposite 'tendencies' in the sacred books; and we must at least acknowledge the closeness and carefulness of their reading, and be willing in that respect to profit by their example."

The investigations of these critics have, moreover, thrown indirectly most valuable light on the history of the early Church, and on the development of thought exhibited in the books of the New Testament. They have compelled a more general and adequate recognition of the human side in the inspired writings, and have done much to enlarge and increase our capacity for following with intelligent sympathy the organic life of early Christianity. But all these valuable results ought no longer to be allowed to disguise the fact, that the characteristic motive and the main contention of the criticism in question have been based on an enormous error of judgment, and that the labour and ingenuity we have acknowledged have been directed to the most perverse conclusions. That this is the fact is substantiated by the admissions of such unimpeachable witnesses as Dr Holtzmann, and we should miss a most important lesson if we failed to recognise it, and to state it plainly. German criticism will always command respect and attention, but it ought never again, on subjects like these, to exert the spell which it threw over much theological speculation during the past thirty years. It has been proved, in its most fascinating and most successful form, to have led its followers into a ditch, and to have

been, for its avowed purposes, no better than the blind leading the blind.

The moment is not an inopportune one for recalling this experience. Another sensational school of criticism has been rising into prominence during the last few years, which is attempting in respect to the Old Testament a somewhat similar enterprise to that which Baur attempted with the New. Wellhausen and his followers are similarly endeavouring to explain the Old Testament as a natural human development by turning it topsy-turvy, and would make out that the Law of Moses is the product and not the starting-point of Jewish life and history; so that, as it has been concisely put, in place of the expression, "the Law and the Prophets," we ought to speak of "the Prophets and the Law." This theory has been received with similar admiration in Germany to that which greeted the enterprise of Baur, and it has been echoed over here, in some quarters where more caution and sense of responsibility might have been expected, as the latest oracle of an infallible criticism. The history of the school of Baur will suggest to thoughtful minds the wisdom of exercising a good deal of patient reserve before allowing themselves to be much disturbed in either direction by this new hypo-

thesis. It can hardly be supported with more brilliancy, or meet with more apparent success, than that of the Tübingen school; and it may meet the same fate. The researches it stimulates may bring to light many valuable results, and may lead to a better apprehension of Jewish history and of the Jewish Scriptures. But we are justified, by the experience on which we have been dwelling, in looking with suspicion on a German attempt, however brilliant, to overthrow the fundamental conceptions of our traditional belief. Such criticism has been proved, in a matter far more accessible to its resources, capable of an entire failure of judgment; and a presumption is thus established for the present against its claims to deference in a new enterprise.

It is not less important, however, to indicate, before we dismiss the subject, the point in which this error of judgment consists. It lies in the failure of such critics to enter into the dominant spirit and main purport of the writings with which they are dealing, and in the consequent concentration of their attention on mere secondary details. We have noticed the cold and mechanical tone of criticism which marks Dr Holtzmann's learned work, and it is eminently characteristic of the defect to which we refer.

Having carefully read through his volume, word for word, we should find it difficult to point to half-a-dozen passages in which he betrays any sense of the intense spiritual life, and the burning Christian thought, which, at any rate, are the most characteristic features of the writings with which he has to deal. His theory, already mentioned, of the origin of the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians, is a conspicuous instance in point. It comes to this, that some post-apostolic writer, getting possession of a letter of St Paul's which forms the kernel of the present Epistle to the Colossians, proceeded to remould and expand it into the Epistle to the Ephesians, his main motive being inspired by his "tendency" to gloss over the divergence between Pauline and Jewish Christianity. Now, side by side with this explanation, let us recall to the mind of the reader the following passage from the third chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, which, as not being in that to the Colossians, must have been composed by the supposed inventor:—

"I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which are your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of

His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end."

Is that, we would ask, a passage which can conceivably be attributed to a partisan of the post-apostolic age, concerned mainly with facilitating the construction of a plausible *modus vivendi* between adherents and opponents of Judaistic views? A critic who fails to perceive that the first characteristic of an Epistle such as that to the Ephesians is that it springs directly, in one earnest flow of ardent and practical devotion, from the heart of a writer of extraordinary depth of thought and feeling, and who can dissect it as though it were the cold-blooded compilation of a calculating pamphleteer—such a critic is disqualified for his task from the very outset. While he is labouring over a minute comparison of phrases and words and particles, the essential spirit is escaping him,

and he is destitute of the first elements of a sound and broad judgment.

But perhaps the most conspicuous instance of this cardinal error in the criticism of Germany is to be seen in its treatment of the Gospel of St John. One would never suppose, from reading the greater part of the discussion on this subject in books of Dr Holtzmann's school, that the central interest of St John's Gospel consisted in its intense and affecting representation of the personal character and work of the Saviour. We are overwhelmed with speculations as to the origin of the Logos doctrine, and with an endless mass of disputed and ever-disputable details, while all the time the main fact is left out of sight — the fact which has secured and still secures the hold of that Gospel over Christian hearts—that the Saviour lives and speaks in its pages with a supreme power and reality. Dr Holtzmann sums up a long discussion by saying (p. 436) that "the riddle of the fourth Gospel is solved, so far as it is capable of solution, by a correct apprehension of the course of history which is mirrored in it—of the whole past which Christianity lived through since the days of John the Baptist to the time of the Evangelist a hundred years later." Thus we read in the Acts (xix. 1-7) of persons who had been baptised into

John's baptism being further baptised by Paul into the name of the Lord Jesus — or, in Dr Holtzmann's language, of the merging of the school of John into the school of Christ; and the purpose of the narrative at the commencement of St John's Gospel of the relations between the Baptist and our Lord is supposed to be to give this experience of Church history a basis in the life of our Lord Himself. Similarly, the account of our Lord's discourse with the Samaritan woman is said to be suggested by the conversion of the Samaritans by Philip, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The event referred to really occurred in the Church's life, but the author of the fourth Gospel represents it as an event in the life of our Lord, and transfers it to His days. Similarly, the eighth chapter, in which our Lord denounces the Jews as of their father the devil, is to be understood in reference to the Gnostic idea of the double seed of mankind. The tenth chapter, with its exquisite parable of the Good Shepherd, is to be explained in reference to the requirements of the pastoral and episcopal office, and so on; and our Lord's foreknowledge, as described in St John's Gospel, of the future of His cause and of His Church, is to be explained by reference to the needs and the crisis of a far-advanced development of

Christianity. Would it be possible for learned men to indulge in this solemn trifling if their attention were not diverted from the main and essential characteristics of the narrative?

Renan has committed the same blunder—we do not know whether it ought not to be called a crime—in another form. He acknowledges the enormous difficulty of supposing that a Gospel so full of "grace and truth" can have been composed by a man who, as is evident, intended throughout to make it understood that he was the Apostle John, when he was no such person. But he is induced to overcome this difficulty by the aversion he feels from the "dry, metaphysical, flat, and impossible" discourses which the Gospel puts into the mouth of our Lord. Professor Holtzmann is superior to such an absurdity, and in one of the few passages in his book which betray any sympathetic feeling, says that "the whole pathos of the discourses of Jesus exhausts itself in carrying out the thought that all salvation, temporal as well as eternal, is involved in faith in the single person of the Son of God" (p. 417). But this "pathos" involves the whole problem. Who invented—who could have invented—a picture at once so sublime and so moving, so lofty and yet so tender, so instinct with the most delicate human feelings as well as

with the divinest life, as that which the fourth Gospel presents of our Lord? All other considerations are secondary in comparison with this. It is perfectly clear from Dr Holtzmann's discussion, in which he states at great length and with careful impartiality the various views which have been held, that critics are unable to agree on any single point which is decisive against the authorship of St John. He himself says (p. 420), in summarising the history of criticism on the subject, that "a multitude of various standpoints presented themselves, and the Johannine question appeared more and more —'je länger je mehr'—an open one." But if at all an open one on the grounds of historical and literary criticism, it should be regarded as settled at once on grounds of practical and spiritual common-sense. A thousand minor literary and historical improbabilities are less improbable than that the picture of the Saviour's acts and words in St John's Gospel is the work of a second-century compiler—still worse, as Baur supposes, of an ecclesiastical romancer.

In a word, the whole "Tendency theory," which would explain the great mass of New Testament writings as composed for an oblique purpose, ought to have been intolerable from the outset to any one who could appreciate their

main character, and the simple, practical object by which they are obviously animated. We can only ascribe its acceptance to a kind of colour-blindness, which can discern nothing but a single ray of the spectrum in the white and brilliant light of the sun. It is worth bearing in mind also that, if such theories have any truth in them, it must be assumed that the Christian Church could supply, down to at least the year 140, persons otherwise wholly unknown, who were capable of producing works on a level with the highest productions of apostolic thought. Whoever will read Dr Salmon's interesting account of the Apocryphal Gospels, and of other non-canonical books, will appreciate the probability of such a supposition. But critics like Dr Holtzmann seem to have no eye for the gulf which, in point of power and wisdom, separates inspired from uninspired writings, and one of the points he chiefly insists upon is the unreasonableness of supposing that there was any break or "fall" between apostolic and post-apostolic times. One of the first great facts, which must be patent to any sound criticism, is the reality and the magnitude of such a fall.

In a word, the criticism which Dr Salmon, in conjunction with the Bishop of Durham and Dr Westcott, has, we believe, exploded, at least

for this country, has failed from a cause which is well indicated in the title to which it aspired. Dr Holtzmann (p. 179) dwells on the distinction between the "lower" and the "higher" criticism. The so-called lower criticism, of which he treats Bengel and Wetstein as representatives, concerned itself with manuscripts, translations, and other means of restoring the original text. But "the higher, the inner criticism, is a product of that Protestant science which had freed itself, in accordance with its principles, from every dogmatic influence upon its judgment." In theory, it endeavours to penetrate into the inner and higher elements of the works which it criticises, and to judge them by the degree in which they conform to the standards thus established. But the higher criticism of Germany, as represented by such critics as Dr Holtzmann and the Tübingen school, has conspicuously failed in this very attempt. They have remained at the very portals of apostolic and Christian thought, deterred by the distraction of a single, and after all a secondary and passing controversy, from penetrating to its centre. The real source of Christian life, devotion to a risen and living Saviour, with the consequent endeavour to exhibit in life the Spirit He bestows—this, which is the true motive of

Gospels and Epistles alike—is obscured to them by an exaggerated apprehension of an episode in the history of the Christian Church; and they allow their eyes to be blinded by a confused romance of the second century to the blaze of spiritual, mental, and moral force by which the New Testament writings are distinguished from all others since apostolic times. It is all very well to be free from dogmatic prepossessions, but whoever is to interpret Christian writings, and distinguish the false from the spurious, must be in sympathy with essential Christian truth. Criticism is really "high" in proportion as it can enter into the thought and heart of Apostles, in proportion as it is animated and controlled by the Spirit which inspired them, and can share the spiritual experiences by which they were moved. For this reason, the tradition of the Church, so far as it represents the spiritual judgment of Christians, embodies, after all, a far "higher" criticism than that which has hitherto usurped its name. But its verdict needs to be vindicated from time to time by the best resources of learning or science, and this is the service which, for all intelligent English readers, has been so admirably performed by Dr Salmon.

THE LATEST ATTACK ON CHRISTIANITY.

The following article was published in the 'Quarterly Review' of July 1887, upon the late Mr James Cotter Morison's work, 'The Service of Man, an Essay towards the Religion of the Future.'

In reviewing this book we are distracted by somewhat conflicting feelings. It is in some respects so bad a book, and in others so feeble and illogical, that it might seem best left alone. The author, moreover, tells us at the commencement of his preface that he has not been able, in consequence of illness, to finish his work according to his original plan. Not only has his design been thus carried out incompletely, but there are traces, in the last chapter at all events, that he has not been able to execute thoroughly even the parts which he has published. We would fain, therefore, have regarded the faults of which the book is full as attributable in charity to the weakness of ill-health, and

we enter with some reluctance upon a criticism which must needs be severe. In spite, moreover, of the author's perversities, and even monstrosities, of thought and feeling, he exhibits in part of the volume so much sympathy with great characters and high ideals, and he expresses such warm, though mistaken philanthropy, that we could almost have been content to leave his errors to the sure correction of experience. But on the whole we cannot satisfy ourselves that such a course would be just to the public, or to the faith which Mr Morison assails. The work is in many respects the most bitter and unscrupulous attack which has been made on Christianity in England within our generation. It is the work of a man who enjoys distinction in the world of letters, and who must know very well what he is about in putting it forth. It is not like an imperfect expression of crude difficulties by an inexperienced writer, prompted by some hasty impulse. It is deliberately published by a man of matured literary experience, who knows the responsibility entailed by reckless reasoning and unjust accusations in matters of serious importance. In spite, too, of the fallacy of its arguments, it is written in an incisive and vigorous style, and its misrepresentations are so effectively urged as to be calculated

to do serious mischief if they are not exposed. Lastly, the writer claims to speak on behalf of important schools of philosophical thought in our day, and represents, we suppose, particularly the school of Positivism. From his position and reputation, much of what he says must be assumed to illustrate a considerable current of anti-Christian thought, and to exhibit its sources. If the book, therefore, were ignored, we might seem to be declining a challenge from a competent antagonist; and as the challenge has been given by a person who should be fully conscious of its gravity, he cannot complain if we accept it seriously, and subject it to a thorough and severe investigation. The result will, we think, be to afford a conspicuous instance of the recklessness, the ignorance, the inconsistency, and the bad feeling by which the most presumptuous attacks on our religion are generally characterised.

Mr Morison begins with a number of confident assertions respecting the decay of belief in Christianity, on which it might be enough to say that they are mere assertions, and in our judgment, to say the least, gross exaggerations. That doubts which are in some measure of a new character have of late years been making way in certain classes is no doubt true. Among

men of science and among critics there have been too many who have hastily come to the conclusion that recent discoveries are incompatible with the truths and facts of our faith, and who have propagated this form of scepticism with mischievous success. Mr Morison, no doubt, lives among them and hears them echoing one another's assertions, and is persuaded that they represent the tendency of the world at large. But the course of human thought at any time is a very large and complicated subject, and those who are absorbed in a particular current are rarely able to estimate the direction of the main stream. Mr Morison waves Bishop Butler's authority aside with the somewhat insolent condescension characteristic of his school of thought, acknowledging the success of his work "as a reply to the shallow Deism of his day"—not a very high estimate of a book which stands to theology much in the position which its almost contemporary work, Newton's 'Principia,' holds to science. But whatever the value of Butler's arguments at the present time, he is an indisputable witness to one matter of fact. Those against whom Bishop Butler wrote were quite as confident as Mr Morison is now, that belief in Christianity was coming to an end. "It is come," says the bishop, "I know not how, to

be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry, but that it is now, at length, discovered to be fictitious;" and Swift, in his inimitable 'Argument to prove that the abolishing of Christianity in England might, as things now stand, be attended with some inconveniences, and perhaps not produce those many good effects proposed thereby,' ironically says that "the system of the Gospel, after the fate of other systems, is generally antiquated and exploded, and the mass or body of the common people, among whom it seems to have had its latest credit, are now grown as much ashamed of it as their betters." But the course of events has proved that the freethinkers of Butler's day were entirely mistaken in their estimate of the relative forces at work, and that Christianity was soon to exhibit a new and vigorous life.

This instance is at least a warning against such confident prophecies as Mr Morison indulges in; and we must in particular remind him that conspicuous facts are entirely against him in his repeated assertions that science has established conclusions which are absolutely incompatible with Christian faith, so that "the shock now is along the whole conterminous line between science and theology," or that "the width of the

breach between reason and faith, between theology and science, is hardly denied." The name of the late Professor Clerk Maxwell, than whom there has not been of late years a greater man of science nor a more sincere Christian, would alone be a sufficient witness against him. But when the President of the Royal Society, Sir George Stokes, publicly throws his great scientific authority into the support of Christian belief, and accepts, for instance, the presidency of the Victoria Institute, when other members of the Royal Society, fully acquainted with the results of science, hold eminent positions in the Church and in Church institutions, there is something very inexcusable, and even offensive, in boastful assertions which imply an aspersion either on the mental capacity or on the good faith of such men. In Butler's words, such considerations are enough to prove "that any reasonable man, who will thoroughly consider the matter, may be as much assured, as he is of his own being, that it is not, however, so clear a case that there is nothing" in the claims of Christianity to be compatible with science. Mr Morison's chapter on the Decay of Belief is in great part a piece of mere scientific browbeating, to which the general answer we have indicated is sufficient. There are, to say

the least, men of first-rate scientific eminence, who must be known to Mr Morison, who do not believe that either geology, or biology, or anthropology, or any other science, is inconsistent with the truth of the Christian religion; and this being the case, it is unnecessary for us to vindicate in detail the compatibility of Christian doctrines with particular scientific theories —least of all with one which, to say the least, is as yet very imperfectly defined, that of evolution. The field of the relations between science and theology is too wide to be entered upon in detail in this place, and we prefer to give our main attention to the definite arguments against Christianity which Mr Morison advances on his own behalf.

But there are one or two points in this browbeating chapter, of which it is worth while to take particular notice, as they illustrate either the ignorance or the recklessness with which we have charged the writer. A particularly flagrant instance is afforded by his treatment of Archbishop Whately's observation, that

" no complete or consistent account has ever been given of the manner in which the Christian religion, supposing it to be a human contrivance, could have arisen and prevailed as it did. The religion exists; that is the phenomenon; those who will not allow it to have come

from God are bound to solve the phenomenon on some other hypothesis less open to objection; they are not indeed called upon to prove that it actually did arise in this or that way, but to suggest (consistently with acknowledged facts) some probable way in which it may have arisen, reconcilable with all the circumstances of the case. That infidels have never done this, though they have had nearly two thousand years to try, amounts to a confession that no such hypothesis can be devised, which will not lie open to greater objections than lie against Christianity."

We need not note a passing sneer at Whately's "candour or perspicacity" in assuming that during all these 1800 years the human mind was in a position to devise hypotheses adverse to Christianity, because Mr Morison tells us that the only important point lies in the fact that the requisite hypotheses have been devised since Whately wrote.

"The important point to observe," he says, "is how completely Whately's assertion that a rational explanation of the origin of Christianity has never been given has, by the Biblical and historical studies of the last half-century, been overthrown. Strauss, F. Ch. Baur, Keim, and Hausrath, to name only the chief writers, have made the early history of Christianity at least as intelligible as other scholars have made the early history of Rome."

This is a good example of the positive assertions with which Mr Morison tries to overbear

us; but it happens to be of such a nature that, to any one really acquainted with the names he mentions, its absurdity is patent. "Strauss, F. Ch. Baur, Keim, and Hausrath," all mentioned in one breath as having united to make the human origin of Christianity intelligible! No doubt that is what each of them tried to do; but the best proof that they have failed is their mere enumeration, for it reminds us that the theory of each of such critics has in turn been rejected by his successor as inadequate. The mention of Strauss in particular, as having made the early history of Christianity intelligible, is incomprehensible in a man who knows anything of the other writers he mentions; for Strauss's theory, at all events, is by those writers themselves denounced as untenable, and by one of them as even ridiculous. Thus Keim, in his 'History of Jesus for General Circles' (Zurich, 1875), says at p. 21, after dwelling on the historical value of St Paul's testimony, that, with respect to several cardinal points of our Lord's life, it affords us, "in the main, firm ground, historic foundation, which at once confounds a flat denial, and shows the precipitation of Strauss's former attempt in 1835 summarily to demolish the structure of the Gospels and the life of Jesus, and to dissolve it into a mythology to be scattered to the four

winds." Keim's claim, in fact, is to have shown that the Gospels contain an account of really historical events, to be explained by human and historical considerations. Strauss's claim was to have destroyed the whole historical character of the Gospels, by evaporating the alleged circumstances in the life of our Lord into mere myths. Baur, again, complained of the insufficiency and unsoundness of this criticism. It was, he urged, a criticism of the Gospel history without a criticism of the Gospels, and consequently could only lead to a negative result, leaving all uncertain, in the undefined boundary between the historical and the mythical. What is to be thought of a writer who classes these three critics together as having united to make the origin of Christianity intelligible? But perhaps a quotation from Hausrath, the last of the four whom Mr Morison mentions, will afford the most decisive exposure of this display, by Mr Morison himself, of one or other of the two faults which he ascribes to Whately —want of "candour" or of "perspicacity." In the preface to the second edition of his 'History of the New Testament Times' (1873) he says :—

"Although holding fast by this stand-point to-day, yet we are far from denying that the first attempts at a purely historical treatment of the origins of our religion were in various respects unsatisfactory.

"It is well known in how grand a style Ferdinand Christian Baur attempted this task some thirty years ago. Never has the internal criticism of historical sources been more boldly treated than, for example, in his 'Church History of the First Three Centuries.' In this work the collected literary materials were sifted, and its position allotted to every part; and thus the old ecclesiastical history became pre-eminently a history of literature. But the presentation of the literary process is only one part of the work to be accomplished. Literary monuments are always only a casual deposit of historical movements, not these movements themselves. Besides the contest about theological conceptions which presents itself more especially in literature, there remain rich historical materials, which had little interest for Baur. The special motive power of Christianity was not its theology, but the strong religious and moral impulse which proceeded from Jesus Himself. The rest is merely local and individual, and much was developed from the relations of the young Church to its century and the State. To complete on this side the picture of theological movements which Baur has so splendidly drawn, is the task which historic theology has inherited from the mighty dead. An attempt to bring out the historical connection, by which the primitive Church was interwoven with its age, was first undertaken by Renan. But just as certainly as he who needs the mechanical impulse of miracle as an explanation of the conquests of Christianity over the powers of its age, has *not* comprehended its internal pre-eminence, so neither has he who seeks to explain that great movement by any of the childish vehicles used by Renan. Various kinds of idyllic situations, foolish coincidences, innocent deceits, cannot produce a new conception of

life. History, more especially religious history, declines such a petty derivation. What is needed is rather such a comprehension of the internal pre-eminence of Christianity over the theories and tendencies of its age, that its course can be understood without resort to the crutches of miracles and convenient coincidences. Certainly there must be above all a religious understanding, which has a proper sense of the power of the factors here at work. When an irreligiousness, which is avowed and founded on principle, undertakes to write 'A Life of Jesus,' it at once becomes apparent that, in order to understand a founder of religion, one must one's self be religious; just as much as, to compose a useful history of music, one must be musical. Only on the supposition that he was not able to appreciate religious forces, can we explain the strange judgment of David Strauss, that all the true and good things uttered by Jesus are scarcely worthy of regard when compared with the results of the belief in the resurrection, so that, *historically considered,* this must be declared to be the greatest historic humbug that ever occurred. But could it be considered *historical* to derive a revolution like that of Christianity from an illusion? When one theory refutes another, it is because it rests on internal grounds; and where those are wanting, neither actual nor invented miracles can turn the course of the world's history. But for a man who is incapable of estimating the power of religious impulse, all the mighty revolutions in the world's history which have proceeded from this source remain unintelligible; and because he sees a movement, without being able to recognise its motive power, the whole process appears to him to be — humbug! Such a conception may be interesting, but it cannot be called *historic.*"

Here, in a single passage by one of Mr Morison's own witnesses, are four of these writers, by whose united labours Whately's difficulty is said to have been solved, shown to be dissatisfied with each other, and the latest of them says that the first was lacking in the religious sense indispensable for his task, and that his theory may be interesting but is certainly not historical! Baur's theories, of which Hausrath acknowledges the boldness, while asserting their insufficiency, are now, in essential points, generally abandoned in Germany itself. Could Whately have been more amply justified? The course of the past fifty years, to which Mr Morison appeals, would seem in fact to justify us in stating Whately's argument still more strongly. He was only able to say that infidels had never given any satisfactory explanation of the origin of Christianity on purely human grounds. Since his time the vast ingenuity and industry of German scholars have attacked the problem with concentrated energy, and each new writer does but bear testimony that the others have failed. Considering the resources of ability and learning which have thus been directed to this object without accomplishing it, even to the satisfaction of a favourable audience, we may feel almost justified in saying not only that the attempt has

not been successful, but that its impossibility has been practically proved. When a writer deals with so cardinal a point in a spirit either so careless or so unscrupulous as Mr Morison here exhibits, his position is discredited at the outset. The statement is of much the same character as if a political writer were to urge that no real difficulty is presented by the Irish problem, as the mode of solving it has been rendered perfectly intelligible by Mr Gladstone, Lord Beaconsfield, Mr Parnell, and Lord Hartington.

There is a still more momentous subject which is dealt with in this chapter with a similarly ill-instructed presumption; and we feel the more bound to notice the point with some special attention, because Mr Morison is in this case echoing an argument which has perhaps been allowed too long to go unchallenged. In the 'Nineteenth Century' for January 1884, Mr Herbert Spencer published a paper, which he has since reprinted in his volume on 'Ecclesiastical Institutions,' under the title of a "Religious Retrospect and Prospect"; and this paper contained a criticism of the Christian conception of God, which was at once acclaimed by another sceptical writer, though he disputed the general conclusions of the paper, as containing

"the last word of modern philosophy" on this great conception. Mr Morison similarly quotes the main passage in Mr Spencer's argument as exhibiting intellectual difficulties which are sufficient to extinguish the traditional belief in a Supreme Being, and above all in "the admirable conception of the Man God, Jesus Christ." The argument may be very briefly stated, so far as its main principle is concerned. It is pointed out that every faculty of human nature is limited in its character and action; that our intelligence, our will, our consciousness, are all subject to unavoidable conditions of succession, of space, and of time; and that, for instance, there is a logical inconsistency in speaking of a divine consciousness, which, instead of perceiving things and events one after another, as our own does, sees them all at once. Or again—

"The conception of a divine will, derived from the human will, involves, like it, localisation in space and time; the willing of each end excluding from consciousness, for an interval, the willing of other ends, and therefore being inconsistent with that omnipresent activity which simultaneously works out an infinity of ends."

Or again—

"Intelligence, as alone conceivable by us, presupposes existence independent of us and objective to

it. It is carried on in terms of changes primarily wrought by alien activities, . . . and to speak of an intelligence which exists in the absence of all such alien activities is to use a meaningless word. . . . Hence it is clear that the intelligence ascribed answers in no respect to that which we know by the name. It is intelligence out of which all the characters constituting it have vanished."

St John says that "God is Love"; but this, according to Mr Spencer's argument, is to say that He is the subject of an emotion which we only know in a finite form, and which is thus inconsistent with the idea of an infinite Being.

Now there is one observation which a book like Mr Morison's renders it necessary to impress in the strongest possible manner upon all who approach such discussions, or who are disturbed by them. It is—to speak the plain truth on a subject upon which it is wrong to speak less than the truth—that it is a piece of pure and inexcusable ignorance to suppose, as Mr Morison suggests, that these difficulties are due to the recent "growth of knowledge," as though they had been discovered and stated for the first time by these modern sceptics, and that they represent problems before which, for that reason, Christian theologians must stand aghast. Any one who is familiar with the history of philosophy and theology will feel as if he were being carried

back to the questionings of babes in arguments of this kind, and that his opponents are becoming such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. Why, these difficulties and problems have been confronted by every philosophical theologian who has ever written; nay, by every profound philosopher of the ancient world. They are the first, and not the last, words of philosophy, the very alphabet of theological science. They are stated, confronted, and answered, in particular, in the great divines of the middle ages, with a clearness and a precision in which the modern statements of them are conspicuously lacking. They have been considered, moreover, and answered, and the answers have been made the very foundation of philosophical Christian thought, by great modern writers. Besides Dean Mansel's 'Bampton Lectures,' which are more quoted than studied by those who disparage or misuse them, the problem has been fully discussed in a well-known and valuable treatise on the knowledge of God, published in our own generation by a distinguished French divine, Father Gratry.[1] There is something which may well provoke a

[1] La Connaissance de Dieu. Par A. Gratry, Prêtre de l'Oratoire, Professeur de Théologie morale à la Sorbonne. Seventh edition. Paris, 1864.

just indignation in the manner in which men endeavour to scatter doubts abroad respecting the truths of the greatest and most beneficent religion ever known to mankind, without giving themselves the trouble of answering, or apparently of so much as reading, the great writers by whom those doubts have been considered, and in whose works the philosophical principles of our faith have been discussed with a rigour sadly wanting in most modern disputation. There is, in fact, something, on the face of it, ridiculous in men waving out of court, as disposed of by a few pages of a modern philosopher, beliefs and philosophical convictions which have been those, not only of Apostles, but of a Plato, an Augustine, an Anselm, a Newton, and a Coleridge. There must be more in beliefs held by such men than these sceptics allow; and until they can understand and admit that there is, they do not really deserve, for their own sake, to be answered.

But for the sake of others whom they perplex with this "philosophy falsely so called," we must endeavour to point out, as may be done in principle with some brevity, the essential fallacy of such objections. Mr Spencer and Mr

Morison say that to attribute to God faculties of that finite character which we observe in ourselves, and at the same time to regard Him as a perfect and eternal Being, involves a contradiction in terms. Of course it does. But what writer in the Scriptures, or what Christian theologian of any eminence, ever for a moment attributed to Him faculties like in all respects to our own? and above all, what Christian philosopher ever forgot that they cannot be attributed to Him in their finite form? Why, it is the very assertion of Christian theology, as of the Scriptures throughout, that the qualities and characteristics which we ascribe to God, as resembling our own, are essentially distinguished from them in the infinite expansion which they receive in the divine nature. Take a characteristic passage from the prophet Isaiah: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." There, in the most touching and most human expressions, are attributed to God those anthropomorphic characteristics which our modern

Agnostics denounce; but does the prophet, for that reason, suppose that the divine nature is to be measured by our own, or that its thoughts and actions are comprehensible by us? On the contrary, he immediately adds: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The prophet believed, in a word, that characteristics and attributes similar to our own might exist, and in God did exist, in an infinite development—a development so infinite as to remove them from the sphere of our comprehension as much as the heaven is higher than the earth, but yet without disturbing their real similarity and kinship with our own nature. That is the question at issue, —not whether Christian theologians have been foolish enough to contend that the divine intelligence, the divine will, and the divine causation are but highly magnified forms of our own, but whether they are infinitely greater than our own, and yet retain a real analogy to them. It is eminently characteristic of the carelessness and inconsecutiveness which frequently mark Mr Herbert Spencer's writing, that he himself proceeds to illustrate and to

justify this very method of thought and argument. He concludes[1] that

"these and other difficulties, some of which are often discussed but never disposed of, must force men hereafter to drop the higher anthropomorphic characters given to the First Cause, as they have long since dropped the lower. The conception which has been enlarging from the beginning must go on enlarging, until, by disappearance of its limits, it becomes a consciousness which transcends the forms of distinct thought, though it always remains a consciousness."

We do not know what may be implied in the qualification "distinct" thought; but it is obvious that if a conception remains a consciousness, it remains a subject of thought; and bearing this in mind, it is the strangest part of this uninstructed attack on the elements of our faith that in this statement Mr Spencer has simply expressed the very method by which the greatest divines have taught that our partial apprehension of the divine nature is attained. Thus St Thomas Aquinas argues that, in attempting to attain some knowledge of God, it is necessary to use the method of "removal"—*via remotionis*:—

"The divine substance," he says,[2] "transcends in its immensity every form which our intellect attains, and thus we cannot apprehend Him by knowing what He

[1] Ecclesiastical Institutions, p. 837.
[2] Summa Philosophica, i. 14.

is, but we can obtain some knowledge of Him by knowing what He is not. For we approach so much nearer to a knowledge of Him, in proportion as we are able by our understanding to remove more and more from Him."

Thus, he goes on to explain, we remove from His nature one after another of the limits by which our own is circumscribed, and He is distinguished from us by this very denial of our own limitations. The negative terms, in fact, by which—as, for instance, in the first of our Thirty-nine Articles—God is described, exactly answer to that disappearance, or removal, of limits on which Mr Spencer insists. The article states that He is without body, without parts, without passions — *incorporeus, impartibilis, impassibilis.* But these apparently negative expressions are really affirmatives, for they are the denial of all limitations. They are assertions that faculties, emotions, intelligences, which in us are limited, are in the divine nature expanded to an infinite degree, and united in an infinite perfection. So, again, the case is simply and clearly stated by Bishop Beveridge, in his treatise on the Thirty-nine Articles [1] :—

"When we poor finite creatures set ourselves to consider of our infinite Creator, though we may appre-

[1] Works, vol. vii. p. 24.

hend something of Him by ascribing all perfections to Him, yet more by removing all imperfections from Him. We cannot so well apprehend what He is, as what He is not. We can say indeed He is infinitely good, infinitely wise, in and of Himself, eternal and all-sufficient; but, alas! when we speak such words, we cannot apprehend the thing that is signified by them. Our understandings being themselves finite, they cannot apprehend what it is to be infinite, and as they are imperfect, they cannot conceive of any perfection, as it is in God. But now of imperfections we have the daily experience in ourselves, and therefore know the better how to abstract them all from our apprehensions of the Deity; and so the clearest apprehension that we can have of Him is by removing imperfections from Him. I cannot conceive it, though I verily believe it, how He is of Himself infinitely holy, just, and powerful; yet I can easily conceive how He is without body, parts, and passions; that He is not such a one as I am, who have a body, am compounded of parts, and am subject to passions: but whatsoever He is in Himself, be sure he is infinitely above such imperfections as these are."

It may be worth while also to quote from Father Gratry a short passage which states very clearly and summarily the character of the Christian argument on this subject, and in which, moreover, he indicates very justly its harmony with the highest form of mathematical reasoning. He says (vol. i. p. 63):—

"Ce procédé, qui en géométrie s'élève à l'infini

mathematique, s'élève aussi, en métaphysique, à l'être infini qui est Dieu. Rigoureux comme la géométrie, il est en outre de beaucoup le plus simple et le plus rapide des deux procédés de la raison [syllogism and induction]. Sa simplicité même et sa rapidité en ont jusqu'ici empêché l'analyse complète.

"Il consiste, étant donné par l'expérience un degré quelconque d'être, de beauté, de perfection . . . à effacer immédiatement, par la pensée, les limites de l'être borné et des qualités imparfaites qu'on possède ou qu'on voit, pour affirmer, sans aucun intermédiaire, l'existence infinie de l'Être et de ses perfections correspondantes à celles qu'on voit.

"Assurément ce procédé est simple; chacun peut l'employer, et les moindres esprits, sur certains points, y vont aussi vite que les autres; mais il est rigoureux. C'est ce qui est aujourd'hui démontré par les travaux du XVII^e^ siècle, analysés et comparés."

Without knowing it, then, Mr Spencer has asserted, in his endeavour to disparage the conclusions and the methods of Christian Theology, the very method, and one of the elementary results, which that theology has upheld. The real question is whether it is impossible to believe that the realities of which there is a finite manifestation in ourselves can exist in a Supreme Being, in an infinite degree, without all analogy between our nature and His being destroyed; and, strange to say again, this very question is decided, and practically answered in

the affirmative, by the same confident critic. In the very paper from which we are quoting, Mr Spencer says that "the final outcome of that speculation commenced by the primitive man, is that the Power manifested throughout the universe distinguished as material, is the same Power which in ourselves wells up under the form of consciousness." He maintains, accordingly, that there was a germ of truth in the rudimentary religious conceptions of his imaginary savage, who worshipped his ancestors; and that consequently "the ultimate form of the religious consciousness is the final development of a consciousness which at the outset contained a germ of truth obscured by multitudinous errors." Now when, after a denial that there is any justification for ascribing to God powers similar to those which we feel in ourselves, we are told that, after all, the Power manifested throughout the universe is the same Power as presents itself in our own consciousness, and in conclusion, that "amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty that we are ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed," it seems obvious to ask whether this supposed confutation of Christian belief re-

specting the nature of God has not really admitted and asserted the primary philosophical principles on which that belief rests. Why should it be logical and philosophical to speak of "an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed," and absurd and illogical to speak of an Infinite and Eternal Love from which all things proceed? Energy is a human conception as much as love; and if the last result of Agnostic philosophy is that there remains the one absolute certainty that we are in the presence of an Eternal Energy, the last word of modern philosophy is an assertion that its conclusions were anticipated in the Scriptures, and nowhere more so than in the great statement of St John. Or what, again, can be more illogical than to pronounce it an "absolute certainty" that we are in the presence of an Infinite Energy from which all things proceed, and yet that the things which thus proceed from that Energy give us no conception of its character? St John similarly asserts that we are in the presence of an Infinite Energy; but he draws the plain and common-sense conclusion, which the human heart has ever drawn, that the nature of that Energy is revealed in its action, and that, whatever it may be in itself—a matter with which we have but little concern—it is

an energy of power, of wisdom, and of goodness. It is an energy of righteousness, of truth, and of love, raised to an infinite degree of force, but still righteous, true, and loving; and our privilege is to partake of those energies, and enter into communion with them in their highest form. Physical science teaches us that the same elements, which are the life of the globe on which we live, exist also in the sun, but in a state of activity so intense and overwhelming as to be beyond our utmost conceptions. Similarly, another apostle declares that "our God is a consuming fire." All that love, all that justice, all that light, which in a comparatively gentle and obscure form make the elements of our life here, exist in Him in a condition of the most infinite and overwhelming force.

Of course we are not assuming that the considerations thus recalled to the reader's attention are sufficient, as thus stated, to decide the great question at issue between Christians and Agnostics. To deal with that question fully would require not an article, but a number, of the 'Quarterly Review.' But such considerations are more than sufficient to rebut the assumption so lightly made by Mr Morison, that Mr Herbert Spencer's crude observations represent a discovery, due to the growth of knowledge, which

is fatal to the claims of Christian faith. It will be seen that these philosophical spectres have been faced by every theologian or philosopher of importance from the dawn of theological science to the present time, and that a Christian, when he is confronted with them, may well adopt Coleridge's reply to the lady who asked him if he believed in ghosts, "No, madam, I have seen too many of them." The problems thus presented to our thought are very serious, as are most philosophical problems; but they have been fully considered, and some of the greatest minds which have ever existed have deemed the Christian solution of them the true one. Let them be reconsidered, by all means, if modern philosophers desire it. Christian theologians have no objection to free discussion. It is the very air they breathe, and it has been the life of Christian truth. But do not let it be assumed that to state difficulties, however serious, is enough to show that they cannot be answered; especially when they are difficulties which are familiar to every competent student of the subject, and to which answers have been given again and again. We shall presently find Mr Cotter Morison admitting the immense force and vitality of Christian thought. In the theological discussions of the fourth century, he says, "all the faculties of the

reason and logical understanding were brought into play, subtlety the most acute, and discourse of reason the most lofty." We are only concerned at present to express the humble opinion, that doctrines which have thus been subjected to the test of "all the faculties of the reason and logical understanding," "of subtlety the most acute and discourse of reason the most lofty," are not conclusively disposed of by a quotation of three pages from Mr Herbert Spencer.

We have a few more words to add with respect to this characteristic attempt at scientific and philosophical bullying. Mr Morison endeavours to make a great point of the manner in which the views of theologians have had to be accommodated, from time to time, to the facts forced on them by the continual advance of science.

"Geology," he says, "seems to contradict Genesis in a very direct and final way. 'That is all your mistake,' says Theology, 'Geology and Genesis are in most perfect union; in fact the science confirms the Scripture so wonderfully, that each reflects light on the other.' The fact that the Geology thus warmly accepted now was once resisted with energy and anger as an impious and futile science, is passed over. New light as to its harmony with Scripture was not noticed until it had obtained a position of power which made it more desirable as a friend than as a foe. The fact is suggestive."

Suggestive, no doubt; but of what? To us it is suggestive simply of the truth that theological science, like all other science, is progressive, and that its progress is aided by that of the other sciences. If it has for a time shrunk from the new light and repelled it, precisely the same may be said of science. Even Lord Bacon, more than half a century after the death of Copernicus, ridicules his grand discovery as the dream of "those few carmen who drive the earth about." If old theological opinions have had to be modified to meet the discoveries of science, it is no more than has happened to science itself, as Mr Morison himself bears testimony.

"In the history of science," he says (p. 6), "it has often happened that a newly discovered truth has proved inconsistent with prevalent opinions, which had the sanction of tradition in their favour. But the position has always been felt to be intolerable, and that one of two things must happen—either the new truth must reconcile itself with the old opinions by the necessary modification; or the old opinions must reconcile themselves with the new truth by a similar process. In astronomy the heliocentric theory, and in biology the circulation of the blood theory, produced the latter result, and revolutionised those two sciences by expelling a number of previously unsuspected errors. In modern times, on the other hand, the plausible theory of spontaneous generation has been

forced to beat a retreat through its proven inconsistency with older truths firmly established."

But this process of "necessary modification" of old opinions is precisely what has taken effect in theological thought respecting the relation between Genesis and Geology. If it is a scientific and laudable process in the one case, why should it be a matter of reproach in the other? Every true theologian heartily subscribes to Butler's vigorous declaration, "Let reason be kept to; and if any part of the Scripture account of the redemption of the world by Christ can be shown to be really contrary to it, let the Scripture, in the name of God, be given up." We must add, however, the caution which follows these words, as a sufficient demurrer to various objections urged by Mr Morison against points of detail in the relation of science and theology, particularly in respect to the argument from design: "but let not such poor creatures as we go on objecting against an infinite scheme, that we do not see the necessity or usefulness of all its parts, and call this reasoning."

Such is the value of the series of arguments and considerations which Mr Morison lays at the foundation of his attack on our faith, and which, in his opinion, "might seem sufficient to

bring about a rapid extinction of the vulgar belief." We have dwelt on two or three cardinal and characteristic points, passing over such hackneyed topics as the credibility of miracles, and we would ask whether a contemptuous attack on a great religion could be less justified by the learning and thought on which it is based, or by the temper with which it is animated? It might well be deemed unnecessary, in point of argument, to follow Mr Morison any further. He might be said, in parliamentary phrase, to have totally failed to prove his preamble. He recognises, however, that such difficulties have not been sufficient to detach "the mass of Englishmen" from Christianity, and that "the land which has done most to work out the philosophy of Evolution, is perhaps still the most Christian in faith and practice remaining in the world." He asks the reason of what seems to him so strange a phenomenon, and finds it in such considerations as the following:—

"Though perhaps the chief, the yearning for divine sympathy is not the only ground of men's hesitation to follow the guidance of intellect in this matter. The idea still prevails that Christianity is, after all, the best support of morality extant. What system of ethics, it is asked, can compare with the Sermon on the Mount? There are even some who hold that paradise and hell can ill be spared; the one as incen-

tive to good, the other as a deterrent from evil. How can you expect, it is inquired, self-sacrifice, devotion to duty, if man is to die the death of a dog, and to look for no hereafter? It is assumed as obvious to common-sense that in that case we shall eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. . . . Take away the mingled fear and hope of a future state of rewards and punishments, and what possible check can be imagined to the universal indulgence of unbridled desires?"—Pp. 54, 55.

These undoubtedly are among the most potent reasons why Christianity retains its power over a thoughtful and earnest people. Its ultimate foundation, of course, is the simple fact that it is true; but many who are unable to examine scientifically its claims to belief, are swayed by their sense of its moral influence, and by the satisfaction it offers to the deepest cravings of the heart. Mr Morison accordingly sets himself to what we should have thought would have been, to any man of culture, the ungrateful task of stripping Christianity of its alleged consolations, and, above all, of representing it as essentially hostile to morality. We must, indeed, charitably suppose that the task was really more ungrateful to Mr Morison than would at first appear, and that it is because he is to a great extent arguing against his own better nature and his own literary, if not moral, conscience that,

in the chapters on the "Alleged Consolations of the Christian Religion," on "Christianity and Morals," and on "Morality in the Ages of Faith," he displays a bitterness and unscrupulousness which, as a mere man of letters, we should have thought he would have been ashamed of. His inconsistency, indeed, as we shall have further occasion to observe, is amazing. He tells us, later on, that

> "It is in the action of Christian doctrine on the human spirit that we see its power in the highest and most characteristic form. Neutral or injurious in politics, favourably stimulating in the region of speculative thought, its influence on the spiritual side of characters, naturally susceptible to its action, has been transcendent, overpowering, and unparalleled."

Yet this is the religion against which he endeavours to substantiate the disgraceful charge, "that the doctrine of all Christians in the final result is antinomian and positively immoral. They do not only not support and strengthen morality as they claim to do; they deliberately reject and scorn it." Could a wilder paradox be maintained than that a religion should exert a transcendent and unparalleled influence in elevating and sustaining natures of the highest moral sensitiveness, and yet that its doctrine should be positively immoral? It is difficult

not to believe that in these defamatory chapters Mr Morison is wrestling unconsciously with his own deeper convictions, and is thus betrayed into the extravagances and injustices which we shall have to expose.

We do not think it worth while to be at much pains to refute the perversities of the chapter on the "Alleged Consolations of the Christian Religion." Its professed object is to inquire whether religion has really been in the past the solace and consolation which are asserted; but its method is to leave out almost entirely the consideration of its consolations, and to depict all the anxieties, fears, and sorrows which are apt, especially at the outset, to accompany deep religious apprehensions. We willingly make Mr Morison a present of all these descriptions of moral and spiritual distress—even of his exaggerations of the teaching of Calvinistic theology. There is, indeed, something palpably absurd in his extravagant language respecting Calvinism. He speaks of "the breaking out of those two dreadful pestilences, Scotch Calvinism and French Terrorism. While they prevailed in their greatest virulence, the minds of men were deformed and made hideous, as their bodies might be by smallpox or elephantiasis;" and in another place he speaks of "the revolting devil-

worship which once passed under the name of Christianity in Scotland, and, what is more, really was Christianity, Gospel-truth, supported by texts, at every point taken from Scripture." This is mere abuse at random. If "devil-worship" really was Christianity, then it is devil-worship which exerted those transcendent and elevating influences over the human spirit which, as we have seen, Mr Morison ascribes to it; and it is notorious that these transcendent influences have been as beautifully exhibited in the characters of Scottish Calvinists as in any other Church. If a religious system is to be estimated by the general type of character it has produced, the Scotsmen of the last two or three generations are the best answer to Mr Morison's abuse of their religious training. We fully agree that the Calvinistic system presents injurious distortions of some important points of Christian doctrine. But it has also asserted other essential truths of the Christian faith with admirable force and clearness; and its moral discipline has developed in a remarkable degree a God-fearing, self-controlled, and dutiful type of character. Even the violent descriptions of the divine judgments which Mr Morison quotes from Boston on 'Human Nature' are but a form of that apprehension of the inexorable character of the laws

of truth and righteousness which contributed much of their force to Carlyle's best writings.

But allow that religion has all these terrors, what then? The point of the argument lies in a question which Mr Morison does not consider —the question whether such terrors and sorrows are not overbalanced by the moral and spiritual happiness which follows. If they are—if, even in the worst form, they are but the means by which such happiness is to be won—an argument which would disparage religion on account of them is one of mere cowardice. "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." In proportion as the struggles of deeply religious minds are but the travail-pangs of a new birth into a moral and spiritual paradise, to shrink from them exhibits a weakness, which it would be an insult to women to call effeminacy. Mr Morison, indeed, shows in another place that he knows better than his argument in this place implies—as, in fact, he is continually answering himself. At the end of the book, to justify his own theory of the possibility of dispensing with rewards and punishments, he has to argue that the disappointments and the sufferings which often accompany

virtue are no real deterrent from it to noble minds :—

"We have to notice that the gratification of all the passions is more or less attended with pain. Indeed, it would seem that all intense pleasures need to be tipped with a sharp point of pain to give them their full zest. . . . A passion for virtue, therefore, is not found to be at any disadvantage as compared with other passions, in the occasional pain which its gratification involves. If 'il faut souffrir pour être belle,' it is also true that 'il faut souffrir pour être bon.' "—Pp. 316, 317.

Precisely so; but this being the case, what is the relevance of all the quotations in the previous chapter from Jeremy Taylor, Bunyan, Pascal, and Cardinal Wiseman, to show that the pursuit of religious excellence is not without its pains and even agonies? Mr Morison quotes a passage from Bunyan's 'Grace Abounding,' in which he describes his miseries when suffering under the apprehension of his sins and God's judgments. But nothing is said of the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' in which the peace is described to which these struggles led; and Mr Morison must know very well what Bunyan's answer would have been if he had been asked whether the result was worth the cost.

But the most astonishing part of this argument has yet to be mentioned. If there is

one consolation specially characteristic of Christianity, it is the assurance it has given of life and immortality hereafter, and of an abundant reward in heaven for any sufferings here endured in submission to the divine will. "Rejoice," said our Lord, "and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." But though it is scarcely credible, it is the fact, that Mr Morison's sole consideration of this momentous point is contained in the following sentence: "A future life, however, is one of the most enormous assumptions, without proof, ever made; and yet on this immense postulate all the alleged consolations of religion of necessity hang;" and with these few words he waves aside this overwhelming source of Christian consolation! Of course to Mr Morison a future life is "an immense postulate," "without proof"; but to the Christian it is one of the greatest of certainties. His faith in it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Could there well be a greater perversity of argument? Mr Morison reads his own doubts into the Christian's mind, and then denies the reality of the consolations the Christian alleges. The question he had to consider was whether, on the supposition that a Christian accepts with entire faith the assurances of our Lord and His

apostles respecting a future life, his consolations do not infinitely outweigh his sorrows. But to this, which is the vital question in the argument, he gives no consideration whatever; and his argument is consequently disposed of by a single sentence of St Paul: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

It will now be sufficiently seen with what kind of an antagonist we have to deal—a man too bitterly prejudiced to attempt to realise the true nature of the belief he is attacking, and content to dwell on any apparent difficulties which he can turn to account, without waiting or caring to consider what is their relation to other elements in the case. But still more flagrant instances of this unscrupulous advocacy remain to be considered. They constitute the gravest part of Mr Morison's indictment of our faith, and if his allegations in this part of his argument could be established, it would hardly be worth while to resist his attack on other points. He proceeds to discuss the question to which we have already referred, of the influence of Christianity upon moral conduct, and maintains the astonishing theses above quoted, "that the doctrine of all Christians in the final result is antinomian and

positively immoral. They do not only not support and strengthen morality as they claim to do; they deliberately reject and scorn it." As we have already said, it would be sufficient evidence in refutation of this charge that, as Mr Morison himself subsequently argues, Christianity has ever possessed a peculiar attraction for men of special tenderness of heart and conscience. But let us consider the grounds on which Mr Morison bases this wild charge. He admits that "these assertions may be regarded as savouring of paradox," and he says he will accordingly "proceed, not to give more or less plausible reasons for accepting them as true, but to *prove* them"—the italics are his own—"and that by the most authoritative utterances of representative Christian doctors." After the instances we have already given of Mr Morison's notions of "proof," the reader will not expect much rigour in the demonstration; but few would be prepared for the inexcusable misrepresentations which are offered under this name.

He begins by a palpable perversion of an important and characteristic statement by Paley:—

"If I were to describe," says that great writer, "in a very few words the scope of Christianity as a *revelation*, I should say that it was to influence the conduct

of human life, by establishing the proof of a future state of reward and punishment—'to bring life and immortality to light.' The direct object, therefore, of the design is to supply motives, and not rules; sanctions, and not precepts; and these were what mankind stood most in need of."

Upon this, and more to the same effect, Mr Morison observes:—

"In other words, the purpose of the mission was to make men fit for a future state of reward, and to supply sanctions which would deter them from conduct which would make them fit for a future state of punishment. Salvation in the next world is the object of the scheme, not morality in this."

Now it will, we think, be evident that instead of this being a repetition of Paley's statement in other words, it is a statement of the direct contrary. Paley says that the scope of Christianity, as a revelation, is "to influence the conduct of human life"; Mr Morison says that its object is not morality in this world—that is, not right conduct in this world. He seems, in fact, to have failed entirely to understand Paley's point. Paley, he says, "is willing to admit that the teaching of morality was not the primary design of the Gospel," and he interprets this as if it meant that the practising of morality was not the primary design of the Gospel. What Paley

says is that people practically knew what was right and wrong, in the most important points of conduct, without the further revelation of the Gospel, but that what they needed were adequate motives for acting up to their duty. According to Paley, morality in this world is the direct and immediate object of the Christian scheme, and salvation in the next world is its ultimate and subsequent object. Mr Morison begs the whole question when he goes on to say, that "though the two objects may occasionally coincide, it is only a casual coincidence. Such difference of ends must lead to a difference of means." Paley's argument implies the precise contrary; and the precise contrary, at all events, is the uniform teaching of a set of Christian doctors whom Mr Morison finds it for the most part convenient to ignore in this book—the writers of the New Testament.

"The grace of God," says St Paul, "that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."—Titus ii. 11-14.

That quotation alone, which was, we think,

the favourite passage of the great Selden, would be enough to dispose of Mr Morison's attempt to show that the Christian scheme separates "salvation" from good works. The fact is, that salvation means the restoration of that soundness of nature which enables a man to do good works, and, as St James says, it is practically tested by them.

Mr Morison's opening contention on this topic, therefore, is simply a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of a familiar argument. His subsequent "proof" may be more plausible, but is equally fallacious. We pass over many minor inaccuracies in his statement of theological doctrines, in order to come at once to the main point. It is simply a statement of the objection, as old as the time of St Paul, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" St Paul met it with an emphatic Μὴ γένοιτο, "God forbid"; but St Paul's arguments on the subject are not deemed worthy of Mr Morison's attention. He prefers to take as his "representative Christian doctors" Dr Pusey, St Alphonso de' Liguori, and Mr Spurgeon. We must needs say, with due respect for the surviving member of this triumvirate, that their utterances are not the most authoritative which might have been appealed to among uninspired Christian doctors on this sub-

ject. But if they are quoted, they should at least be quoted fairly, or in such a manner as to give due weight to any qualifications with which their statements may be accompanied; and Dr Pusey has, at all events, been treated with flagrant injustice. Let us, however, hear Mr Morison's own statement of the point he wishes to establish :—

> "All Christian doctors," he says, "agree that true repentance and turning to God, however these may be brought about, are rewarded by salvation. Past sins, —nay, a whole life of sin,—if repented of before death, are a far less obstacle to entrance into paradise than the most exemplary and virtuous life, if unaccompanied by true faith in Christ."

The latter sentence is a perfect hyperbole of misrepresentation, and it is difficult to understand how a man accustomed to argument could proceed in the first instance to quote our Eighteenth Article in support of it. That article denies that men shall be saved "by the law or sect" which they profess, and asserts that Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ whereby men must be saved. But it says nothing about an exemplary and virtuous life being an obstacle to salvation; and Mr Morison ought to have known very well that all it asserts is that the most virtuous man is not saved by means of his virtue, which, however

praiseworthy, is insufficient for that purpose, but for the merits of the Saviour. We cannot here diverge into a defence of this position; but to quote it as saying or implying that a good man is saved in spite of the obstacle presented by his virtue, is a degree of misrepresentation of which it is difficult to speak with patience. But Mr Morison proceeds to a more plausible quotation from Dr Pusey. The passage is quoted as follows from 'What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment,' p. 117.

"'There never was a doubt in the Church,' says Dr Pusey, 'that all who die in a state of grace, although one minute before they were not in a state of grace, are saved. . . . We know not what God may do in one agony of loving penitence for one who accepts his last grace in that almost sacrament of death.' Thus penitence is everything and morality nothing. Years of sin, which may, which are sure to have caused widespread moral evils, to have been a source of corruption and leading astray to the weak and the ignorant, are all obliterated by one moment of loving penitence; that is, they are obliterated as regards their effects on the sinner's status in the next world. He is washed in the blood of the Lamb and goes to glory."—P. 94.

Now we beg the reader to observe the gap in the quotation from Dr Pusey. The two sentences which it divides are separated by about two pages; and the words which immediately

follow the second sentence, which in Dr Pusey's text is the first, are these :—

"The question, however, is not about individuals. As a class, we could not affirm that those who bring forth no worthy fruits of repentance, with whom, after a long period of deadly sin, repentance has been but a superficial work, may not, after death, be in a state of privation of the sight of God (the *pœna damni*), not being admitted at once to the sight of Him, whom on earth they little cared to think of or to speak to, and whom they served with a cold and grudging service. And the absence of the sight of God, whom the soul in grace knows to be its only Good, would, when the distractions of this world no longer dazzled it, be an intense suffering, above all the sufferings of this life."

Now, we ask, what is to be thought of the fairness of a writer who, in quoting a divine of Dr Pusey's authority, omits so momentous a qualification as this? Dr Pusey carefully explains that the statements quoted by Mr Morison refer only to the possibilities of divine action—"We know not what God may do"—in exceptional and individual cases, and he states in express terms that he cannot make any such affirmation respecting persons who have passed a long period in deadly sin, "as a class." Mr Morison omits this important limitation, and quotes the saying expressly as if it were affirmed respecting such persons "as a class." The quota-

tion from Alphonso de' Liguori is a superstitious story of a monstrous criminal saved from execution by "the glories of Mary," and it is no part of our case to deny that outrageous perversions of truth and morality have been perpetrated by extreme Roman theologians. As to Mr Spurgeon, we object to his rhetoric being quoted as "authoritative," even as expressing his own views; if he has said that "great sinners shall have no back seats in heaven," he has at least spoken recklessly; and some of the language Mr Morison quotes from him is offensively rash and antinomian in its tone, and contrasts conspicuously with Dr Pusey's guarded statement. But we protest against Christianity being held responsible for the passionate rhetoric of a popular preacher, however estimable on the whole; and it seems to us a sure sign of a weak case that Mr Morison, in order to "prove" his assertion, has to misrepresent the only learned divine of the English Church whom he quotes, and to go to an Ultramontane casuist and a Baptist minister for his other authorities.

We fully admit, however, when stated with due care, the main principle which Mr Spurgeon and Dr Pusey both have in view—namely, that true repentance and faith, even at the last moment, are sufficient to save a sinner from

eternal ruin. But when it is argued that this doctrine makes penitence everything and morality nothing, two momentous considerations are left out of sight. The first is that, as Dr Pusey states, such repentance and faith, at such a moment, are wholly exceptional in their character. We were the more concerned to draw attention to Mr Morison's unfair quotation from Dr Pusey, because it indicates that he had missed the main point of such statements. He had mistaken statements, which are perfectly true in regard to exceptional cases and extreme possibilities, as though they were representations of the ordinary course of Christian grace and life. It is perfectly true, that if a man repents truly at the last moment, he will be forgiven; but it is also true, and Christian divines have earnestly insisted upon the truth, that years of sin, such as Mr Morison speaks of, tend to make such repentance so difficult as to be almost miraculous. Mr Morison, for instance, has what we must needs call the indecency of bringing into the argument our Lord's words to the robber on the cross, and of insinuating, what he is obliged to disclaim in the same breath, that our Lord's assurance to His fellow-sufferer was prompted by "deferential speech to Himself." But not to dwell on the

gratuitous insult to Christian feeling involved in such a suggestion, what case can be conceived more wholly exceptional than that of a sinner witnessing and sharing the sufferings of the divine Redeemer? If any influence could produce a wholly unequalled effect on the soul of a man who had any spark of good left in him, it is the influence of such fellowship in suffering, and of such an example. To say that this is "almost exactly parallel" with a legend cited by St Alphonso, indicates that kind of moral disproportion in a man's views which is enough to exclude his judgments on such matters from serious consideration. There are few points on which Christian divines have more earnestly insisted than that morality avenges itself only too terribly on prolonged sin, by rendering repentance more and more impracticable. As Coleridge says in the 'Aids to Reflection':—

"Often have I heard it said by advocates for the Socinian scheme, True! we are all sinners; but even in the Old Testament God has promised forgiveness on repentance. One of the Fathers (I forget which) supplies the retort: True! God has promised pardon on penitence, but has He promised penitence on sin? He that repenteth shall be forgiven; but where is it said, He that sinneth shall repent? But repentance, perhaps, the repentance required in Scripture, the passing into a new and contrary principle of action,

this *metanoia*, is in the sinner's own power, at his own liking? He has but to open his eyes to the sin, and the tears are close at hand to wash it away? Verily, the tenet of Transubstantiation is scarcely at greater variance with the common-sense and experience of mankind, or borders more closely on a contradiction in terms, than this volunteer transmentation, this self-change, as the easy means of self-salvation!"

This is one of the considerations to which Mr Morison has chosen to pay no regard. The other omission is even more inexcusable. It is difficult to suppose him ignorant that it is a prominent point of the Christian creed that every man will be judged according to his works. "We must all appear," says St Paul, "before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." This is a point mentioned in each of the creeds, and holds a foremost place in the earliest Christian teaching. Our Lord's office as the Judge of the quick and dead is a primary element in Christian doctrine respecting Him. Yet scarcely a reference is made to it in Mr Morison's "Discussion of the Relation of Christianity to Morals." Is it easy to conceive a grosser disregard of the main facts which a serious writer on this subject had to consider? Two seasons of the Christian year, Advent and

Lent, are devoted to the inculcation of this vital truth upon the Christian mind. The judgment of which men are thus annually reminded is a judgment on their morality, and the repentance to which they are summoned is a repentance from immoral conduct of every kind. When, therefore, Mr Morison sums up his indictment by saying of Christian teachers that "salvation was their object, not morality; they have not aimed at it, and they have not attained it," he is contradicted by the most patent facts of everyday Christian life, and by the most familiar Christian creeds.

But we must add, that he writes in no less ignorance of human nature than of Christianity. The quotation we have made from Coleridge sufficiently exposes his supposition, that repentance is the easy thing which his argument requires. But he is still more in error in his estimation of the practical influence upon the human heart of the Christian doctrine of forgiveness. He has overlooked the enormous power of hope and gratitude. The mass of men and women are weak, and grieved at their weakness, and their danger is a sort of hopeless acquiescence in it, if not despair. A message which promises them the forgiveness of a personal God, and holds out to them the hope of restoration to

communion with Him, and of the perfect regeneration of their natures, inspires their hearts with all the moral energy of a new hope. When, besides this, the promise is coupled with the revelation of an act of infinite self-sacrifice on the part of a loving Saviour, a sense of grateful obligation is aroused which appeals to all the better feelings of the heart, and bends the whole soul to gratitude and obedience. The proclamation of free forgiveness is no doubt the cardinal doctrine of the Gospel, and it is no doubt liable to abuse. St Paul's argument in the Epistle to the Romans, to which we have already referred, proves that it was so abused in his day; but the indignation with which he repudiates the abuse embodies the voice of the Christian conscience ever since; and that Mr Morison should make no reference to that famous passage, is a conspicuous proof of his inability or unwillingness to grapple with the real strength of the Christian position. After all, the question is settled, as all such questions are settled, by one short parable of our Lord :—

"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose

that he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged."

But Mr Morison proceeds to give what is perhaps the most flagrant instance which even this book affords of inconsecutive argument and unjust treatment of the faith he is attacking. The next chapter is entitled "Morality in the Ages of Faith," and is designed to support by the evidence of experience his abstract deduction, that Christianity is unfavourable to morality:—

"If only a tithe of the compliments which it is usual to pay that doctrine be true, it is clear that the more we retrograde into the ages where it held undisputed sway over men's minds, the more moral ought we to find the public and private life of the world."

He accordingly proposes an inquiry into the morality of the "Ages of Faith":—

"Do we find, as a matter of fact, that the Ages of Faith were distinguished by a high morality? The answer must be in the negative. Taking them broadly, the Ages of Faith were emphatically ages of crime, of gross and scandalous wickedness, of cruelty, and, in a word, of immorality."

Now there is no fault to be found on principle with this argument. By all means let Christianity be judged by its fruits, and if we find that in the times when its teaching and its discipline were most operative, when they prevailed

in their purest and most powerful form, they did not tend to the promotion of morality, Mr Morison's argument would be perfectly justified. But would it have been credible beforehand that a man of literary culture should select as the period for this experiment the darkest and most superstitious parts of the middle ages, and should say nothing—absolutely nothing—of the influence of Christianity upon the members of the Church during the first four centuries? Mr Morison must know perfectly well that the phrase "the Ages of Faith" is simply delusive as an indication of the force and purity with which Christian doctrine and discipline then prevailed. He knows that the middle ages were times when gross superstition and profound ignorance prevailed among the mass of the Christian clergy, and when perversions of Christian doctrine grew up which provoked a tremendous convulsion at the Reformation. He must know also to what cause these perversions were due. From the time of the fall of the Roman empire the Church had been struggling with fierce, and in some respects barbarous, races; and though she achieved in many respects a wonderful victory, of which we reap the fruits in the present day, their ignorance and their barbarism reacted upon her. When one reads the horrors

of Merovingian France, it is little less than a miracle that in the course of a few centuries a man like St Louis, whom Mr Morison considers perhaps the best man who ever lived, should have been moulded by the Church from the royal blood of that country. The Church was at all events, with all its defects, the great civilising influence of those ages; but to turn to them as the crucial example of the influence of Christianity in its freest and purest action, is a violation of historic truth of which a man of letters ought to be ashamed. Of course Mr Morison has no difficulty in raking up any number of foul and filthy stories from those dark ages; but we must needs say that the detailed recapitulation of these stories, and especially the insistence on what he calls the "sly humour" of some of them, is perhaps the most offensive and most inexcusable part of this volume. It was entirely unnecessary to violate decency in this flagrant manner in order to recall the fact that the Court and times of Louis XIV., or the convents of the later middle ages, were marked by gross scandals. To tell such stories at such length, and with such evident relish, is a singular instance of the high morality on which Mr Morison prides himself or his theories. But when a man can compare, as he does in his

preface, "the barren prostitute" to poor married people with large families, to the disadvantage of the latter, he betrays a moral obliquity which removes all surprise at similar offences.

What, however, is the value of an appeal to experience as to the moral influence of Christianity which goes no further back than the middle ages, and takes no account of the influence of the Church in its purest and most vigorous days? If Mr Morison does not know, he ought to know, as every man of learning does know, that nothing was more conspicuous in the Church of the first four centuries than the intense enthusiasm with which it devoted itself to the cultivation of all the moral virtues, and the rigid discipline which it exercised over its members in respect of their moral conduct. Let a man turn to the 'Apologies' of St Justin Martyr, or to the Canons of the early Councils, and he will be in a position to judge of the monstrosity of the statement, that Christians "have not aimed at morality." We must apologise for troubling the reader with facts with which every educated man ought to be familiar; but the best answer to the charge that Christians, when their belief was purest and most fervent, did not aim at morality, is afforded by the familiar passage in which the younger Pliny

gives Trajan an account of the character of the Christians in his province, as he had ascertained it by judicial inquiry. "This," he says, "was the sum of their fault or error, that they were wont to meet together on a stated day before sunrise, and sing a hymn to Christ as God, and bind themselves by a *sacramentum* that they would not commit theft, or robbery, or adultery, that they would not break faith, nor repudiate a trust." That is the independent testimony of an impartial Roman statesman as to what Christianity "aimed at," as practically exhibited in the life and worship of the Christians of his day; and every one who has studied Church history knows that this was in an extraordinary degree not merely the aim, but the achievement, of the early Church.

But why are we to be debarred from going further back still? What right has Mr Morison to exclude the New Testament from consideration in answer to the inquiry whether the Gospel aims at morality? The New Testament is the charter of Christian doctrine and discipline, and the urgency with which it insists upon morality of all kinds, as indispensable to the Christian character and the enjoyment of the Christian salvation, is too obvious to need any argument. The Sermon on the Mount is a cardinal Christian

document, and to say that it does not aim at morality is too ridiculous an absurdity. Every Epistle directs the ultimate force of its exhortations upon Christian practice, and upon the inculcation of every moral and gracious virtue. St Paul summarily declares, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." In the ages to which Mr Morison chooses to direct his prejudiced appeal, those sacred words were not the common property of Christians; they were shrouded in a learned language, and only faint echoes of them reached the popular ear. Even at this day, in France, under the system of the Roman Catholic Church, a devout French Catholic, M. Lasserre, who recently produced a brilliant translation of the Gospels, expresses the opinion in his preface that, on an average, not more than three persons in a French parish have ever carefully read the Gospels through. But the Gospels and Epistles, and not the superstition and ignorance of the middle ages, are the true exposition of what Christianity aims at; and in proportion as their influence has been felt and has spread abroad, has morality been deepened and widened.

It can hardly be necessary to expose further a

tissue of bitter misrepresentation, not paralleled, to our remembrance, in a man of Mr Morison's position. But at this point he seems to relent, and proceeds to give an account of "what Christianity has done," which, as we have more than once pointed out, is utterly inconsistent with the gross charges he had been bringing against it. Even this chapter is wholly inconsistent with itself. He begins by disparaging the influences under which Christianity arose, and by which Christian theology was elaborated, concluding that the Nicene Creed "was the product of an age of decay, of disaster, and approaching death;" but a few pages further, he urges that "it cannot be a mere accident that Christianity alone has produced elaborate systems of theology, which in depth and compass can compare with any systems of philosophy, ancient or modern." He points to "the intellectual revival which followed the spread of Christianity," and says that "of all writers who have used Latin as their mother tongue, it is no exaggeration to say that St Augustine is by far the most original, suggestive, and profound. He is a genuine thinker, not a mere rhetorician like Cicero, Seneca, and the rest." Similarly, turning to the influence of Christianity on character, he says that

"what needs admitting, or rather proclaiming, by Agnostics who would be just is, that the Christian doctrine has a power of cultivating and developing saintliness which has had no equal in any other creed or philosophy. When it gets hold of a promising subject, one with a head and a heart warm and strong enough to grasp its full import and scope, then it strengthens the will, raises and purifies the affections, and finally achieves a conquest over the baser self in man, of which the result is a character none the less beautiful and soul-subduing because it is wholly beyond imitation by the less spiritually endowed."

Is any further confession needed to exhibit the fallacy and the injustice of all the previous argument? Is it conceivable that a theology which "in depth and compass can compare with any system of philosophy, ancient or modern," can deserve the contemptuous treatment it received in the opening chapters? or that a creed which, where it finds a good soil, "strengthens the will, raises and purifies the affections, and finally achieves a conquest over the baser self," can deserve to have its moral tendency treated with the opprobrium we have had to quote? Mr Morison, indeed, endeavours to escape this paradox by arguing that men in general are no more fitted to yield to the influences of Christianity than to become great artistic geniuses. "It would be as rational to say that the poetry

of Shakespeare, the music of Beethoven, and the geometry of Lagrange were accessible to all men." But they are none the less true poetry, true music, and true geometry, and they are, in fact, accessible to all men in proportion to their capacity. Truths which produce their highest influences on the best natures produce a corresponding, though inferior, effect upon the inferior ones, just as, according to our Saviour's parable, the same seed produces fruit, "some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some an hundred," according to the soil on which it falls. But one of the most miserable points in this Positivist doctrine is that it would create a caste of superior souls, and relegate those who, often by no fault of their own, have become enslaved by baser influences, to permanent degradation. It has no message of mercy or deliverance for the weak or the fallen.

"The sooner," says Mr Morison, "the idea of moral responsibility is got rid of, the better will it be for society and moral education. The sooner it is perceived that bad men will be bad, do what we will, though of course they may be made less bad, the sooner shall we come to the conclusion that the welfare of society demands the suppression or elimination of bad men, and the careful cultivation of the good only."

Such is the result to which we are led by

this theory of an absolute division between the capacities of different classes of men and women. Christianity has been a perpetual source of regeneration, by acting on the opposite principle, by believing that no one in this world is past reclamation, by generous offers of forgiveness, and by setting before men the purest and loftiest moral ideal as the aim of their efforts. If it is to be supplanted, it must be by better logic, better feeling, more honest argument, than is exhibited in this volume.

In short, we must needs say that this book is a disgrace to its author, and to the school of thought from which it issues. We have shown that it starts with an exhibition of scientific bigotry, in direct conflict with the patent testimony of distinguished men of science; that it displays gross ignorance of the recent criticism of the New Testament to which it appeals; that its opening disparagements of Christian theology rest on childish misapprehensions and on the crudest arguments; that it ignores the most conspicuous facts in the consolatory influences of our faith; that it brings a charge against it of immoral tendency, which can only be supported by misquotation and misrepresentation; that its pretended appeal to experience is based on a mere juggle of phrases, and ignores the most

conspicuous and unquestionable facts; and that, finally, the author has practically to give up his case altogether, by admitting that the doctrine and the discipline he has been disparaging is at least the best adapted to the highest human characters. And for what end is all this display of unreason and uncharitableness? Simply, it would seem, to promote the spirit of self-sacrifice, and to direct men's energies to the "service of man." But these are the very two objects which Christianity from the first has had in view, while it has added the supreme motive, that the service of man is at the same time the best service of God. If these are Mr Morison's objects, was it worth while to be illogical, unjust, unhistorical, and profane, in order to disparage a religion of which the Master taught that "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;" and of which His apostle wrote, that "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world"?

APPENDIX.

ROBERT ELSMERE AND CHRISTIANITY.

The following review of Mrs Humphry Ward's novel, 'Robert Elsmere,' was published in the 'Quarterly Review' for October 1888.

THE success of this novel is the most interesting, and in some respects the most instructive, literary event of the present year. It is an instance of Mr Gladstone's keen eye for popular sensation that he at once threw himself into the stream of current interest in the book; and this interest was no doubt augmented by the article which he published in one of those monthly reviews which devote themselves to the impartial dissemination of truth and falsehood. But the book had run rapidly through two or three editions before it had received this impulse. In six months it had gone through five editions in its original form of three closely printed volumes; and it is now commanding a further sale in the cheaper and more popular form of a single volume. A success of this kind is proof that a book has touched some general

and deep source of public feeling, and has given vivid expression to thoughts or interests which are widely spread.

Of the thoughts and interests which have been touched in the present case there can be no doubt. The main subject of the book is very different from that of an ordinary novel. There is, indeed, a good deal of love and passion and social life in it; and these perennial sources of human interest are the material of several beautiful and brilliant passages. The love of Robert Elsmere and of Catherine his wife is, with one grievous exception, a very gracious and tender picture. The series of struggles in Catherine's mind; the transition, from her simple life of religious and domestic devotion in a Westmoreland dale, to the deep and gentle love of married life in a Surrey vicarage; the wrench which her heart and soul undergo when her husband's abjuration of Christianity obliges her to follow him, in solitude and bitterness of spirit, to an unknown and uncongenial career in London; the gradual establishment of a sort of working compromise between her intense womanly love and her still more intense devotion to her old creed,—all this is depicted with a force and a delicacy which bespeak the feminine sympathy as well as the great literary ability of the authoress. There is, moreover, one personage in the story who appeals with sufficient force to the ordinary interests of romance. Catherine's grave character is skilfully balanced by her sister Rose, the child of passionate instincts, which are played on, like her own violin, by art, fancy, love, sympathy, or repulsion.

> "A rosebud, set with little wilful thorns,
> And sweet as English air could make her, she;"

but developing, through her dangerous experiences, the

deeper moral capacities she inherits from her father, Richard Leyburn. The story of Rose's first fancy for the morbid Oxford Don, Langham, not heartless, but with his heart paralysed by a cold scepticism; her painful but salutary escape from him by the act of his own unmanliness, and her gradual surrender, when she had recovered her self-respect, to a worthier and steadier passion; the development of her artistic genius; her social flatteries, triumphs, and disillusions—all this would have furnished matter enough for an ordinary novel, and is described with singular skill and grace. The narrative is relieved and illustrated, moreover, by a rare sympathy with nature, and remarkable capacity for natural description. These pictures of natural scenery are sometimes, perhaps, too lengthy, as in the long description of Whindale with which the book opens, and which we confess seemed to us, at a first glance, so long a stretch of country to be got through before reaching the human interest of the story, that we soon put the book down again when we first took it up. But a very impressive correspondence is maintained throughout between the scenery and the action, and in this, as in many other points, Mrs Ward exhibits high artistic power.

But all these attractions of an ordinary romance are completely overshadowed by the main action and predominant interest of the book. They are the byplay of a story, in which the main subject is a religious tragedy and a theological controversy; and few persons would be at the trouble to read through so long a novel, for the sake of its romantic episodes, who were not chiefly interested in the religious struggle which it depicts. Mrs Ward has invested with the attraction of a personal tragedy some of the most characteristic questions of the critical and theological

debate of the past generation; and many people who recoil from essays and lectures—even from that latest example of the imitation which is the truest form of flattery, the Hibbert Lectures, which have become a sort of scientific rivals of the Bamptons—many people on whom even the witty and irreverent audacity of the late Mr Matthew Arnold had failed to lay much hold, have been attracted by the same representations when furbished up in a novel, and invested with a tragic excitement in the life of an interesting clergyman. To many persons, indeed, the book has for this reason one wearisome and disappointing aspect. It depicts to them a phase of thought, at Oxford especially, long ago lived through, and practically dead. Much of its representations of the state of critical and theological thought remind us of the admirable observation, that "Oxford is the place to which good German philosophies go when they die." The conclusions of the Tübingen school, which have been long recognised as extravagant not only by M. Renan, but in Germany itself, are still described as "that great operation worked by the best intellect of Europe during the last half-century—broadly speaking—on the facts and documents of primitive Christianity" (vol. iii. p. 206); and even the reconstructive part of the book does not get beyond the formulæ and the arbitrary assumptions of M. Renan and Mr Matthew Arnold. But to those who have not followed the critical debate of the last twenty years, this defect constitutes at once the interest and the danger of the book—its interest, because all these exploded fallacies come to them with the attraction and the mystery of novel discoveries; and its danger, because they are unacquainted with the facts and considerations by

which these particular fallacies, at all events, have been banished from the field of instructed controversy. We refrain, in deference partly to Mrs Ward's services in other departments of learning, partly to her earnestness and sincerity, and partly to her sex, from expressing the censure which would ordinarily be due to a writer who engaged in an attack upon the received Christian faith with so imperfect a knowledge of the present conditions of the controversy, and consequently with such inevitable misrepresentations. But for these reasons we feel it incumbent on sober criticism to take more notice of a controversial novel than is ordinarily requisite.

A critic, indeed, is at a great disadvantage in dealing with such a work in a mere essay. The proper answer to 'Robert Elsmere' would be an equally good novel, which, instead of killing Robert Elsmere off conveniently at the moment when his theories were being put to the test of practice, and ending by the greatest piece of romance in the whole book—the statement that the brotherhood he founded still exists—would describe the inevitable breakdown of such arbitrary assumptions and conventions under the stress of common-sense, common history, and common life. In default of this, we will endeavour to supply what Mr Gladstone has justly noticed as the great deficiency of the book—some slight representation of the arguments on the other side. This omission is, indeed, the almost uniform vice of a controversial novel. It is easy to prove anything one pleases in such a composition. The author is able at pleasure to give all the good qualities and all the good arguments to the side which is favoured. It reminds us of the old fable of the picture of an unarmed man throttling a lion, and of

the lion's criticism on it. It is rare to meet a controversial novel in which the beaten side makes any respectable fight, and this defect vitiates the whole description.

In 'Robert Elsmere' this unfairness passes all tolerable bounds, and leads to the one great blot in the personal interest of the narrative. Robert Elsmere is described as struggling for months with the doubts implanted in him by the Mephistopheles of the story, the Squire of his parish, and neither taking his wife into his confidence, nor seeking help or guidance from a single representative of the faith he is tempted to abandon. His treatment of Catherine in this respect seems to us, indeed, too cruel and heartless to be conceivable. He knew that his wife's whole soul was devoted, with a rare depth and sincerity, to the verities he was tempted to deny, and to the life of the Christian ministry of which he was contemplating the surrender; yet he never opens his heart or thoughts to her until his decision is made; and then brings back to her from Oxford, one summer evening, the crash of her deepest hopes and aspirations for himself, and so far for her. The scene in which she is described as almost crushed, and driven away from him for ever, by this heartless shock, is one of the most touching and powerful in the book; and Catherine's conduct and feeling in such circumstances seem to us both truly and finely conceived. But a man who was capable of treating his wife with this cruel self-absorption, or of taking so momentous a step without seeking any counsel from the best representatives of his old faith, exhibits a character very ill suited to the hero of a real religious conflict. The only representative of the old faith with whom he is actually confronted is an

enthusiastic, and even fanatic, ritualist priest, whose sole idea of faith is the desperate renunciation of reason. It is contrary to the plainest dictates of common-sense and common duty that a man should make a decision which involves such consequences to the parishioners in his charge, to his wife and to his friends, without taking the trouble to hear what could be said in answer to his difficulties by some competent representative of the cause he was going to desert. He pays, indeed, a hurried visit to Oxford before his final disclosure to Catherine; but he goes there not to consult some Christian scholar or theologian, but to ask counsel, which he must have known would be encouragement, from a tutor of his old college, Mr Henry Grey, who is practically identified by a note at the end of the volume with the late Professor Green, and whom he knew to have abandoned belief in miracle and miraculous Christianity. A passing sneer at Canon Westcott, for "isolating Christianity from all the other religious phenomena of the world," is the only reference made in the book to the best representatives of learned Christian thought in England.

This, indeed, is only in harmony with the tone of supercilious superiority which the authoress assumes throughout in reference to orthodox Christians. Christianity is spoken of as "a religion which can no longer be believed." Its solemn and sacred records of miraculous action and divine life are patronisingly and contemptuously referred to again and again as "fairy tales"; and in the conversation in which the Squire, in response to Elsmere's own request, reveals the whole extent of his destructive criticism, we are told that a man who regards Christian legend—that is, the miraculous narratives of the New Testament—

as part of history proper, ought to be regarded as "losing caste," and "falling *ipso facto* out of court with men of education." We cannot but say that, at a time when some of the first scholars in Europe are Christian bishops and divines, when the President of the Royal Society and other eminent men of science, besides statesmen and men of letters of the first ability, are decided believers in the old Christian creed, language of this kind approaches insolence, and deserves, even in a lady, severe resentment. Elsmere himself is, in fact, to a great extent the victim not, as Mrs Ward would represent, of truth, but of a superlative conceit. After a few months' study of early French history, a few months' intercourse with a Germanised scholar whom he knows and confesses to be heartless and irreligious, if not immoral, he jumps to the conclusion that he has seen through the fallacies not merely of Canon Westcott and the orthodox apologists, but of eighteen centuries of the best life and the finest intellects in the world, that he can brush away St Paul's evidence as that of a "fiery fallible man of genius," and can even—most shocking of all the scenes in the book—imagine our Saviour speaking to him "in the guise of common manhood, laden like his fellows with the pathetic weight of human weakness and human ignorance," and confessing to him—to Elsmere—that "I had my dreams, my delusions, with my fellows." Mrs Ward might at least have spared her readers, and the character of her hero, that insult to the Christians' Lord and God. But the possibility of such a scene is the measure of Elsmere's appreciation, and Mrs Ward's appreciation, of the real considerations on which this controversy turns. We shall recur to this point in the sequel.

Meanwhile it may be acknowledged to be quite in keeping with the character, that a man who regards Jesus Christ as having been subject to delusions, from which he himself is emancipated, should not think it worth while to seek advice in his doubts from wise and good men who still regard the Saviour as Truth incarnate.

But let us turn more particularly to the alleged reasons for Elsmere's abjuration. He is represented as mainly influenced in his resolve to take Holy Orders by the general religious impression made upon him by the associations of Oxford.

"The religious air, the solemn beauty of the place itself, its innumerable associations with an organised and venerable faith, the great public functions and expressions of that faith, possessed the boy's imagination more and more. As he sat in the undergraduates' gallery at St Mary's on the Sundays, when the great High Church preacher of the moment occupied the pulpit, and looked down on the crowded building, full of grave black-gowned figures, and framed in one continuous belt of closely packed boyish faces; as he listened to the preacher's vibrating voice, rising and falling with the orator's instinct for musical effect; or as he stood up with the great surrounding body of undergraduates to send the melody of some Latin hymn rolling into the far recesses of the choir; the sight and the experience touched his inmost feeling, and satisfied all the poetical and dramatic instincts of a passionate nature. The system behind the sight took stronger and stronger hold upon him; he began to wish ardently and continuously to become a part of it, to cast in his lot definitely with it."—Vol. i. p. 122.

This is not a very deep foundation for a resolve to enter the ministry, or for Christian belief itself; and when he announces his resolve to his two tutors,

Mr Grey and Mr Langham, the seeds of his future doubts are at once sown. Mr Grey, when told of his intention,

"said nothing for a while. . . . 'You feel no difficulties in the way?' he asked at last, with a certain quick brusqueness of manner. 'No,' said Robert, eagerly, 'I never had any. Perhaps,' he added with a sudden humility, 'it is because I have never gone deep enough. What I believe might have been worth more if I had had more struggle; but it has all seemed so plain.' . . . 'You will probably be very happy in the life,' said Mr Grey. 'The Church wants men of your sort.'"

When he tells Langham, the tutor's observation is—

"'Well, after all, the difficulty lies in preaching anything; one may as well preach a respectable mythology as anything else.' 'What do you mean by a mythology?' cried Robert, hotly. 'Simply ideas, or experiences, personified,' said Langham, puffing away. 'I take it they are the subject-matter of all theologies.' 'I don't understand you,' said Robert, flushing. 'To the Christian, facts have been the medium by which ideas the world could not otherwise have come at have been communicated to man. Christian theology is a system of ideas indeed, but of ideas realised, made manifest in facts.' Langham looked at him for a moment, undecided; then that suppressed irritation we have already spoken of broke through. 'How do you know they are facts?' he said, drily.

"The younger man took up the challenge with all his natural eagerness, and the conversation resolved itself into a discussion of Christian evidences. Or rather Robert held forth, and Langham kept him going by an occasional remark which acted like the prick of a spur. The tutor's psychological curiosity was soon satisfied. He declared to himself that the intellect had precious little to do with Elsmere's Christianity. He had got hold of all the stock apologetic arguments, and used them, his companion admitted, with ability and ingenuity. But they were merely

the outworks of the citadel. The inmost fortress was held by something wholly distinct from intellectual conviction—by moral passion, by love, by feeling, by that mysticism, in short, which no healthy youth should be without. 'He imagines he has satisfied his intellect,' was the inward comment of one of the most melancholy of sceptics, 'and he has never so much as exerted it. What a brute I am to protest!'"

We entirely agree with the concluding observation; and we must needs say in passing, that the conversations we have quoted afford a melancholy illustration of the conduct which we must suppose is deemed justifiable by tutors at Oxford in the present day. Christianity is not only regarded at the college described in this book as an open question; but when a talented undergraduate announces his intention of entering Holy Orders, its tutors think it consistent with their duty to insinuate difficulties, like Mr Grey, or like Mr Langham to tell him that the faith he intends to preach is only a respectable mythology. We know what may be said on the other side. To please people who were willing to pay the price of unchristianising a University for a Liberal or Nonconformist triumph, the government and discipline of Oxford are now committed to men who are emancipated from obligation to any form of belief. It may be said that Langham was within his rights in holding his tutorship as an infidel, and that if he was an honest infidel, he was doing no more than was natural, if not his duty, in trying to save his pupil from the perversities of belief. We only say that it is time English parents should thoroughly understand that this is the condition to which the Universities have been brought, and that if they send their sons to a

college like St Anselm's—to any college which does not practically establish a test for itself, like Keble—they expose them, in the immaturity and excitability of their early manhood, to have their Christian faith deliberately undermined by the maturer intellectual force of a philosophical deist like Mr Grey, or a hopeless sceptic like Mr Langham. Mrs Ward knows Oxford well. We have not observed that any protest has been raised against her representation of a college in the University, with its vivid portraiture of more than one well-known character. This must be taken as an Oxford picture of Oxford influences in a great college, and we must needs say that a course of legislation which has placed such men as Mr Grey and Mr Langham in the position of tutors and guides of undergraduates is a scandalous diversion of endowments left for Christian purposes. Grey's question whether he had no difficulties is recalled by Elsmere long afterwards, when he is announcing to his old tutor his renunciation of his ministry; and Langham, in his subsequent intercourse, exerts a steady pressure in a sceptical direction. Mr Grey, of course, when Elsmere's final confession is made, welcomes him, with open arms, as a convert to the final form of philosophical religion. This professor is described as a person of extraordinary moral excellence, and he certainly possessed great qualities of mind and heart. But a system under which a man undermines the Christian faith while using Christian phraseology, and saps the belief of impressible undergraduates while outwardly conforming to the Christian observances of a university like Oxford, appears to us, to say the least, of an equivocal character, both morally and intellectually.

But the seeds of infidelity, thus sown, would probably have lain dormant, notwithstanding an occasional stimulus from Langham, had it not been for the indirect influence of another piece of advice from Mr Grey. He had said to Elsmere, "Half the day you will be king of your world; the other half be the slave of something which will take you out of your world into the general world." He was, moreover, clear that history was especially valuable, especially necessary to a clergyman. So Elsmere took his Final Schools History for a basis, and started on the Empire, especially the decay of the Empire; and was thus led on into "the makings of France." This study, helped by an observation of Langham's which anticipated the subsequent influence of the Squire, is represented as suggesting to his mind a general distrust of past historical evidence. He is especially startled one day by a passage in the life of a saint who had been bishop of a diocese in Southern France, the biography being written by his successor. "It was, of course, a tissue of marvels," and one of them is narrated, of a kind with which every educated reader is familiar in the Lives of the Saints. When he reads the story to Catherine, she exclaims, very naturally, "What extraordinary superstition! A bishop, Robert, and an educated man?" But this is too simple an observation for Elsmere. "But it is the whole habit of mind," he said half to himself, "that is so astounding. No one escapes it. The whole age really is nonsane." This apprehension of the superstitious credulity which prevailed at the commencement of the Dark Ages is described as leading to "the gradual enlargement of the mind's horizons;" so that he comes to see "how miracle is manufactured, to recog-

nise in it merely a natural, inevitable outgrowth of human testimony in its pre-scientific stages."

But he does not reach these far-reaching conclusions from his studies of the history of early France without a good deal of further stimulus from the Squire. This man, Roger Wendover, is a cold-blooded cynical scholar, the owner of a magnificent library, who seems to have had no other interest in life but to read German criticism till he is himself sick of it, and who is celebrated for having "launched into a startled and protesting England" a book in which—

> "each stronghold of English popular religion had been assailed in turn, at a time when English orthodoxy was a far more formidable thing than it is now. The Pentateuch, the Prophets, the Gospels, St Paul, Tradition, the Fathers, Protestantism and Justification by Faith, the Eighteenth Century, the Broad Church movement, Anglican theology, —the Squire had his say about them all."

In short, he is a kind of combination of the late Mr Matthew Arnold, the late Mr Greg, and the author of 'Supernatural Religion.' Elsmere's acquaintance with this man began with a bitter quarrel, in consequence of the Squire's scandalous and heartless neglect of some rotten cottage property in the parish. For a while he sends back the books the Squire had lent him, and all communication between them ceases. But a dreadful epidemic breaks out in the cottages; the Squire is induced by the old doctor of the family to go and see them; finds Elsmere there nursing his parishioners through the fever with admirable devotion; stiffly acknowledges himself in the wrong, and invites oblivion for the past and better relations for the future. Elsmere meanwhile has been reading the Squire's books,

and is fascinated by the man's learning, though appalled for the moment by the doubts they forced upon him. But curiosity prevails over repulsion. He accepts the Squire's advances; discusses his historical studies with him; and everything in the Squire's character is soon forgotten but his mysterious and unfathomable learning. A close intercourse and interchange of thought ensues, abhorrent to Catherine's mind, repulsive, some would have thought, to a clergyman of sensitive feeling. But the Squire is allowed, or rather encouraged, to press nearer and nearer with his critical processes to the citadel of Elsmere's faith, till one day he is practically invited to walk in and develop all his forces. "Well, if he would have it," thought the Squire, "let him have it;" and then follows a conversation of which the following passages give the cardinal points, and those on which we have chiefly to comment:—

"Testimony, like every other human product, has *developed* Man's power of apprehending and recording what he sees and hears has grown from less to more, from weaker to stronger, like any other of his faculties. What one wants is the ordered proof of this, and it can be got from history and experience.

"To plunge into the Christian period without having first cleared the mind as to what is meant in history and literature by the 'critical method,' which in history may be defined as 'the science of what is credible,' and in literature as 'the science of what is rational,' is to invite *fiasco*. . . . Suppose, for instance, before I begin to deal with the Christian story, and the earliest Christian development, I try to make out beforehand what are the moulds, the channels, into which the testimony of the time must run. I look for these moulds, of course, in the dominant ideals, the intellectual preconceptions and preoccupations existing when the period begins.

"In the first place, I shall find present in the age which saw the birth of Christianity, as in so many other ages, a universal preconception in favour of miracle—that is to say, of deviations from the common norm of experience, governing the work of *all* men of *all* schools. Very well, allow for it then. Read the testimony of the period in the light of it. Be prepared for inevitable differences between it and the testimony of your own day. The witness of the time is not true, nor, in the strict sense, false. It is merely incompetent, half-trained, pre-scientific, but all through perfectly natural. The wonder would have been to have had a life of Christ without miracles. The air teems with them. The East is full of Messiahs. Even a Tacitus is superstitious. Even a Vespasian works miracles. Even a Nero cannot die, but fifty years after his death is still looked for as the inaugurator of a millennium of horror. The Resurrection is partly invented, partly imagined, partly ideally true—in any case wholly intelligible and natural, as a product of the age, when once you have the key of that age.

"In the next place, look for the preconceptions that have a definite historical origin; those, for instance, flowing from the pre-Christian, apocalyptic literature of the Jews. . . . Examine your synoptic Gospels, your Gospel of St John, your Apocalypse, in the light of these. You have no other chance of understanding them. But so examined, they fall into place, become explicable and rational; such material as science can make full use of. The doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, Christian Eschatology, and Christian views of Prophecy, will also have found *their* place in a sound historical scheme.

"It is discreditable now for the man of intelligence to refuse to read his Livy in the light of his Mommsen. My object has been to help in making it discreditable to him to refuse to read his Christian documents in the light of a trained scientific criticism."

Such is the sum and substance of the argument by which Elsmere is finally induced to relinquish his faith in the Christian creed. It had been suggested at an

earlier stage by Langham, in reference to Elsmere's study of early French history:—

> "History," he had said, "depends on *testimony*. What is the nature and value of testimony at given times? In other words, did the man of the third century understand, or report, or interpret facts in the same way as the man of the sixteenth or the nineteenth?"

In this question, Langham said to himself, lies "the whole of orthodox Christianity." The Squire accordingly spends his life in writing a book, of which he leaves the manuscript to Elsmere, described as 'A History of Testimony,' which is to "harry the enemy after his death," but which remains, we fancy, in the same land of romance as Elsmere's Brotherhood.

Now to what does all this large vague talk amount? It seems to us to involve a mass of fallacies which the authoress has taken no pains to disentangle. We can hardly suppose she means that all testimony, without exception, becomes less trustworthy as we go further back in history. Of course, in proportion to the scantiness of written documents or monuments, traditional history, such as is recorded by Livy, was liable to be distorted by popular superstition or imagination. But would Mrs Ward venture to maintain that Thucydides, for instance, is a less trustworthy historian, for events which he had direct means of observing, than Clarendon? or Tacitus than Macaulay? In this form the suggestion becomes preposterous, and is reduced to one of those vague generalisations which are the vice of the present day, alike in philosophy, in science, or in history, and which are only intended to prepare the mind for some convenient minor premiss which would not be so easily accepted if stated by itself. If the

attack on Christianity has really been forced back on a proposition, that all testimony previous to the nineteenth century is comparatively untrustworthy, it will, we think, be sufficiently evident that it is argumentatively defeated. No comparison is adequate to such an argument, but that of pulling down your house over your head to put out your candle. In order to extinguish the light of the Christian faith, the whole edifice of past history is to have the ground cut from under it. The simple truth is that past testimony requires sifting in the same way as modern testimony, and the true art of criticism is to sift it step by step. With what success this can be done is proved by the great investigations into the history of Greece and Rome which have distinguished the scholarship of this century. But the work of Niebuhr, or Mommsen, or Grote, or Curtius, has not been based upon a general demurrer to all past testimony, but upon a careful discrimination between direct and original testimony and that which was merely traditional and secondary. There are characters and transactions in past history which stand out just as clearly and certainly on the historical stage as those of the present day; while, on the other hand, there are events and characters and transactions passing at this moment all around us, respecting which persons of the highest position and experience are giving each other the lie every day, to the infinite confusion of public life. Indeed there is a peculiar definiteness and vividness about some of the records of the past, whether in Greece, Rome, or the middle ages, or, we will add, the Scriptures, which is due to a greater simplicity and directness of observation than is possible in a more sophisticated age. To take one illustration bearing upon our main topic,

there are points of unquestioned and minute accuracy in St Mark, and vivid reflections of scenes and features and words in St Matthew, St Luke, and St John, which compel even such a writer as M. Renan to admit that we have before us the very photographs, as it were, of what occurred. The Squire's book, however, has never been published, and until it is we shall take the liberty of leaving this extravagant generalisation alone.

The fact is, Mrs Ward means something very much more practical, and the minor premiss which her puppets slip in is the only one really needed for her argument. What the Squire and Elsmere object to is not testimony in general, but testimony to miraculous events. It is "legend" which is the Squire's bugbear, and in the critical moments of Elsmere's struggle with himself, as in the address in which he expounds his new religion to his East End audience, the catchword of the modern sceptic is emphasised in italics. "*Miracles do not happen.*" It is a matter of no little patience to see this glib fallacy repeated, with a sort of juggle of phraseology of which a writer on so serious a subject should be ashamed. "Miracles do not happen!" Not now, certainly. That is the very case of a reasonable Christianity. The Christian writer says that events which do not happen now, did happen once. Oh! but, says the objector, "they do not happen now." But that is precisely what the Christian says, and is the very basis of his argument. He contends that the occurrence of certain abnormal events, in connection with a very extraordinary person, reveal that person's real nature and character. But again, says the objector, they do not occur in connection with other persons, ordinary or extra-

ordinary. That is not inconsistent with what the Christian says. It is the very point he is contending for. If it were the case that miracles do happen in ordinary times and under ordinary circumstances, if they were within human command and observation as ordinary matters of experiment, they would not be miracles in the sense now in question. The whole question is not whether miracles do or do not happen, in the ordinary sense of that juggling phrase, but whether certain specific miracles did happen at a certain specific time, at the command of a certain specific person or persons; and this is a matter, not of the general question of the validity of testimony throughout the history of the human race, but of certain specific testimony.

It would seem worth observing in passing, that a man who appeals to experience or testimony to prove that miracles do not happen, is by his own act debarred from refusing to consider testimony that they have happened. If he relies on testimony to prove the negative, he cannot refuse to hear testimony to prove the positive. If a writer lays it down *a priori* that miracles cannot happen, as Germans like Strauss and Baur honestly do, and as it seems Mr Grey did, of course all argument on the evidence is precluded, and nothing remains but to invent, as Strauss and Baur did, what seemed to them the least improbable explanation of the Gospels and Epistles. But when a writer says, like M. Renan and Mrs Ward, that "it is impossible to believe in that of which the world offers no experimental trace,"[1] his argument is an argument from experience, and experience is a matter of testimony. The preposterous attempt of Mrs Ward to support

[1] Vie de Jésus, fifteenth edition, p. ix.

Elsmere's case by a general invalidation of testimony is, in fact, a practical admission that for Englishmen, after all, this whole question is one of evidence. An Oxford professor, like Mr Grey or Green, may "stick to the *a priori* impossibility of miracles," but that requires an habituation to German air. The question for English men and women presents itself in the plain and practical shape, whether there is, or is not, sufficient testimony to prove the occurrence of the miraculous events involved in the Christian Creed?

Now in dealing with this issue, what we have to point out is that Mrs Ward has acted the part of a sort of Homeric Aphrodite to her hero, and carried him off from contact with the actual steel of Christian argument under the cloud of her vague depreciation of all testimony, and by the glamour of the fallacious example she has drawn from early French history. As to the latter point, we can only marvel at the unhistorical procedure of this devotee of the historical method. Because Gregory of Tours or the early medieval biographers were superstitious, therefore St Peter, St John, and St Paul are liable to "non-sane" illusions! There is a fine passage in which Mrs Ward describes the extraordinary contrast to modern experience presented to the mind of the historical student who first plunges into the materials of medieval history:—

"Ultimately, of course, he sees that these men and women whose letters and biographies, whose creeds and general conceptions he is investigating, are in truth his ancestors, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. But at first the student who goes back, say, in the history of Europe, behind the Renaissance or behind the Crusades into the actual deposits of the past, is often struck with

a kind of *vertigo*. The men and women whom he has dragged forth into the light of his own mind are to him like some strange puppet-show. They are called by names he knows—kings, bishops, judges, poets, priests, men of letters—but what a gulf between him and them! What motives, what beliefs, what embryonic processes of thought and n: rals, what bizarre combinations of ignorance and knowledge, of the highest sanctity with the lowest credulity or falsehood; what extraordinary prepossessions, born with a man and tainting his whole ways of seeing and thinking from childhood to the grave! Amid all the intellectual dislocation of the spectacle, indeed, he perceives certain Greeks and certain Latins who represent a forward strain, who belong as it seems to a world of their own, a world ahead of them. To them he stretches out his hand. '*You*,' he says to them, 'though your priests spoke to you not of Christ, but of Zeus and Artemis, *You* are really my kindred!' But intellectually they stand alone. Around them, after them, for long ages, the world 'spake as a child, felt as a child, understood as a child.'"

We demur to the supposition of a nearer sense of kindred, in any other than a limited intellectual sense, being felt towards Greeks and Latins than towards Christians. But passing this by, the description in this passage of the confused, barbaric, embryonic ways of thought and feeling in the early middle ages is striking and just. But what is to be said of the historic method, which suggests the transference of this picture to the period when the Christian story was first written and preached, or to the writers by whom it is recorded? It was in a world peopled by those very Greeks and Latins in whom Mrs Ward claims her intellectual kindred that Paul was in great measure educated, and that he chiefly travelled, preached, and died. It was to Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians — not to Jews only, but especially to

Gentiles, at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi—that he preached the resurrection of Christ; and it is in letters to them, of the genuineness of some at least of which no doubt was entertained, even by the leader of the Tübingen school, that he records the fact of miracles being wrought among them. Turning to Judæa, if we find superstition there, we find also an unbridled scepticism. It was a dominant party in the Jewish society of the day who said that "there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit," and the Pharisees, who confessed both, were bitter in their denial of our Lord's resurrection. They were keen disputants, and capable of criticising mercilessly a "legend" which was fatal to their authority. It was in this atmosphere — an atmosphere of the highest Greek and Roman cultivation on the one hand, and of bigoted Jewish incredulity on the other, and not in the untutored world of early Teutonic mystery and imagination—that the Christian story was told and recorded. The sixth and seventh centuries, in which Elsmere loses his head, are ages with very little literature worthy of the name. The first and second centuries are the ages of some of the most distinguished, and we may add some of the most sceptical, writers in Greek and Roman literature; and in Jewish literature the Apostles are contemporaries of Philo. Even on the ground of this general comparison, what can be more extravagantly unhistorical than for a man to allow his mind to be disturbed as to the trustworthiness of records in the first century by the superstition of chroniclers in the sixth or seventh? We must say once more, that the antagonists of the Christian faith must be driven to bay when they take refuge in such topsy-turvy confusions of historical circumstances.

The question is not to be dealt with by these vague propositions or confused analogies. The real issue, which is never faced throughout the book, is, What is the real value of the testimony afforded in the New Testament to the events which it records? In plain words, What is the value of the testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, and James, as there given? They tell a simple, straightforward story, perfectly consistent in at least its main features, whatever difficulties may be raised about some details, as may always be done in respect to matters of fact similarly narrated to us. There has been a great deal of beating about the bush on both sides in the course of this great controversy; and while the critical investigations of the past generation were in progress, it was perhaps inevitable, as well as useful, that the combatants on both sides should endeavour to maintain their respective positions by arguments from probabilities. Christian apologists have endeavoured to show, and we think with singular success, that the truths and facts asserted by Christianity harmonise profoundly with the needs and the nature of man, and that there is no *a priori* incredibility in such events as the Christian creed records. Sceptical writers have endeavoured, we think with signal failure, to show that the needs of mankind and the strain of life can be met sufficiently without any such supernatural aid. But all these arguments, however useful in their place, must sooner or later give way to the plain question of fact; and we think that time has come. Have we, or have we not, ground for believing the narratives and assertions contained in the Gospels and Epistles?

Now in this final and cardinal issue there are two

distinct points, confused by Mrs Ward in the general haze which surrounds all her treatment of the subject. The first is, Were the books written by the persons whose names they bear? The second is, Whether, if so, the evidence of these persons is trustworthy? Now we have shown in more than one previous article of this 'Review'[1] that the settled result of the criticism of the last fifty years is to answer the former question —that of the authenticity of the books of the New Testament—substantially in the affirmative. We do not say that no reserves are to be made in respect to the views of particular critics. But M. Renan is a sufficient witness to the fact that the case against the authenticity of the New Testament books has, in the main, completely broken down. He is no believer in miracle, and is so far a hostile witness. No one can doubt that he is perfectly acquainted with the course of German and French criticism. But he admits, first of all, the authenticity of the majority of the Epistles of St Paul;[2] secondly,[3] that the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles proceeded, in their present form, from the pen of St Luke the physician, the companion of St Paul; thirdly, that in the first Gospel we have the very words of Jesus, bright and flashing as when first spoken; fourthly, that in the second Gospel we have the personal reminiscences of an eye-witness, who may well, as tradition says, have been St Peter; fifthly,[4] that the evidence for the authenticity of the Gospel of St John would be convincing to him if he could only overcome his repugnance to the discourses

[1] The Quarterly Review, vol. 151, pp. 352–384; vol. 163, pp. 460–489. Reprinted in this volume at pp. 289 and 118.

[2] St Paul, pp. v-vi.

[3] Vie de Jésus, Introduction.

[4] Ibid., Appendix.

of our Lord there recorded. It must be remembered that these Gospels and Epistles came to this long critical trial in unquestioned possession of the ground for seventeen centuries. They were believed to be written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, for the same reason that classical books were believed to be written by the authors to whom they were respectively attributed—namely, because they were so attributed, and no one had denied it. The denial was made not in the interests of historical criticism, but in the interests of philosophical theory. Strauss and Baur said miracles cannot have happened, and therefore they set themselves to explain away the evidence that they had. But with this enormous presumption of unquestioned reception behind the Gospels and Epistles, the *onus probandi* was on the critics. They set themselves to disprove their authenticity, and by M. Renan's confession they have, at least in all important points, failed. We quote M. Renan simply as a convenient and sufficient test of the conclusiveness of the critical evidence which has been adduced against the New Testament Scriptures. Whatever else he may be, he is a sceptic, and he is also a man of the widest learning on this subject; and we are justified in saying that critical objections which seem to him ineffectual may be regarded as having failed. But we have shown in one of the articles we have referred to in this 'Review' that similar admissions are made even by representative German critics of the Rationalist school.[1]

We think it necessary to insist on this first point in the Christian argument, as it is naturally obscured by those who would discredit the evidence. Professor

[1] See pp. 155-158.

Huxley, in a recent essay, speaks of the Gospels as "documents of unknown date and of unknown authorship." As he allows himself in the same passage [1] to say that the belief of Christians in a miracle attested by these documents is immoral, we shall not scruple to say that such a description of the Gospels, by a writer who at all events has attended sufficiently to the subject to deem himself qualified to lecture bishops and divines, is nothing less than immoral. We greatly regret to be obliged to apply a similar observation to some recent statements, by Mr Justice Stephen, in the same magazine.[2] We cannot, indeed, mention the name of Mr Justice Stephen in this connection without saying that the part he takes in this controversy is a grave abuse of his position as a judge. It is a recognised consequence of a judge's position that he should abstain from speaking or acting to the prejudice of established institutions. But so long, at all events, as the Church is established, Christianity is the established religion of the country. Justice, in particular, is administered under its express authority, and when Mr Justice Stephen administers oaths in court, he is appealing to the sanctions of the religion which perhaps he has himself been undermining, by one of his articles, in the mind of the witness before him. That these attacks upon our religion, moreover, should be made publicly by a person holding the great office of a judge is a circumstance which cannot but gravely, and unfairly, prejudice the popular mind. Mr Justice Stephen cannot publicly engage in this controversy as a mere individual, exerting no other influence than that of his arguments. By large classes in the com-

[1] The Nineteenth Century, November 1887, p. 632.
[2] October 1887, p. 585.

munity he cannot but be regarded as speaking as a judge, and he thus throws into the scale the weight and authority of an office, with which he was invested for most responsible duties of an entirely distinct nature. If he feels too strongly on the subject to be able to restrain his pen, let him write, as he has written before, and as he has abundant opportunities of doing, anonymously. Above all, when he writes with his name and official title, he might be expected to explain the state of the controversy with judicial impartiality, and not make such statements as the following, in the face of such admissions by M. Renan as we have quoted. He says in the article just referred to :—

"Are not these observations well founded? At the very lowest, are they not continually made in good faith by competent persons? . . .

"It is wholly uncertain who were authors of the Gospels, and when they were written. Matthew, Mark, and Luke must have been either copied, with additions and modifications, from each other, or from some earlier original which has been lost. There is no proof that the Gospel of John was written by John the apostle. There are very good grounds for thinking it was not. . . . The statements of the Gospels are therefore uncertified hearsay."

We cannot refuse Mr Justice Stephen the character of a competent person, or doubt his good faith; but we assert that, in view of the admissions of learned sceptical critics which we have quoted, these observations cannot be called "well founded"; that, on the contrary, no man who has access to the best criticism of France and Germany, to say nothing of England, is justified in ignoring the fact that the balance of the best judgment, on critical grounds alone, after a pro-

longed and merciless controversy, is decidedly against them; and for a man in Mr Justice Stephen's position to be scattering them broadcast is inexcusable. We once heard a venerable judge asked what he thought of a brother member of the bench having contributed an article to a magazine upon a current controversy—a legal one, if we rightly remember. "I think," said the old man, with the grave emphasis of former manners, "that it is an impiety." What he would have said if he had been asked what he thought of a judge publishing in a magazine exploded criticisms against Christianity, we will not try to imagine. For the present we will be content with saying that it is unjudicial.

Unless, in a word, further documentary evidence of a wholly unexpected, and, we may add, inconceivable kind, should come to light, the special issue between Christianity and its opponents, which has mainly occupied the past fifty years, must be regarded as brought to a close. No adequate evidence has been produced to invalidate the unbroken tradition of the Church respecting the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, as that tradition existed, for instance, in the days of Eusebius. On the contrary, much has been brought to light which confirms it; almost every new documentary discovery having brought additional confirmation to it, and having refuted some confident assumption of negative criticism. We are, therefore, in possession of direct contemporary evidence to the facts of the Christian creed, and we have to consider only the second of the two questions we proposed—namely, whether this evidence is credible. It will be observed that, this being the case, we are practically brought back to the position from which Paley argued;

and his argument, so far as it goes, reassumes its former significance and importance. There is, he undertook to show,

"satisfactory evidence that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct;" and, on the other hand, "that there is NOT satisfactory evidence that persons pretending to be original witnesses of any other similar miracles have acted in the same manner, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts."

These arguments will still be to many minds perfectly decisive, when once doubt has been removed, as we have explained, respecting the authenticity of documentary sources; and whether the argument be or be not sufficient to carry the whole case, it possesses at any rate a weight and importance which should claim for it more attention than it has of late received. The facts which Paley marshals with such skill respecting the plain matter-of-fact testimony, borne at the cost of cruel suffering, in the full light of day, by the first preachers of Christianity, and borne not to theories or opinions, but to matters of experience, are at least unparalleled in the annals of any other religion; and they do suffice to sustain the assumption to which Robert Elsmere objects, that the case is an isolated one. To assume beforehand that because a vast number of miraculous stories are legendary, therefore all such stories are of the same kind, is one of those fallacies of hasty generalisation which are characteristic of our

day, and which are peculiarly discreditable to an age which boasts of its scientific virtues. This universal prevalence, at one time or another, of belief in the supernatural or miraculous is, indeed, capable of being applied in exactly the opposite direction. If mankind have been so universally prone to the belief, is it probable that there was never any foundation for it? If miraculous events and supernatural interpositions have ever taken place, it is very conceivable that the human mind was so impressed by them as to be ready to surmise their occurrence at any time, and to generalise in favour of the miraculous with the same hastiness with which modern sceptics and philosophers generalise against it. But if no such things ever occurred within the whole range of human experience, it is somewhat difficult to conceive, especially on the grounds of a philosophy of evolution, how they ever came to be thought of. But, however this may be, Paley's argument, even to those who do not regard it as conclusive, ought to be enough to show that the case of Christianity is a unique one, and that the vague presumptions against the miraculous, of which Mrs Ward's heroes make so much, are entirely beside the mark. Whether the testimony be sufficient to bear the weight of the extraordinary events which it alleges is a further question; but that it is not to be explained away by the general tendency of the human mind, at that time or at others, to imagine what is supernatural, ought to be beyond question.

For the purpose, however, of giving this testimony its full weight at the present day, it has perhaps become desirable to bring into prominence some further, and at the same time simpler, considerations than those which were chiefly suited to Paley's age.

We refer to the inherent moral value of the testimony of the evangelists and apostles. We have not in view, for this purpose, merely those general moral influences of Christ and Christianity on which much stress has of late been often laid. In a very able series of Bampton Lectures, preached in 1877, Prebendary Row threw the main weight of the Christian argument upon the supremacy of the character and influence of our Lord, as illustrated by experience and history, combined with the great array of evidence which can be adduced to the cardinal miracle of the Resurrection. These moral miracles, combined with the one great physical miracle, being recognised, the series of minor miracles recorded in the New Testament fall into harmony with the circumstances of the case, and acquire a credibility which, under the scientific influences of the present day, they would otherwise lack. There appears great weight in this line of argument, and it is no doubt specially appropriate to the time and purpose for which it was intended. It has satisfied some minds, who feel that evidence which would not suffice to prove miraculous occurrences under ordinary circumstances, may well be accepted as sufficient when the circumstances can be shown independently to be extraordinary. At the same time we are disposed to think it an argument of somewhat too elaborate and indirect a nature for the ordinary working purposes of Christian faith. Belief in Christ, in the full meaning of the Christian creed, was not meant to depend, and never has depended, in the case of the great mass of believers, upon arguments which require for their appreciation a wide grasp of religious and historical observation. We want evidence which "comes home to men's business and bosoms," and

which can be stated in plain words, and in brief space.

Moreover, after all, a general defence of the credibility of the miraculous stories is not sufficient to meet the case. It is of great value to establish this general possibility of credence; but even when it has been established, we want reasons for believing, not merely that such things might have taken place, but that we can confidently accept the accounts before us as trustworthy records of what did take place. The difficulty may be illustrated by putting the case in a form which, as we have shown, may now be treated as purely hypothetical. Supposing it could have been shown by criticism that the Gospels were all, as Baur would have had it, second-century compositions with a polemical purpose, it would still have been true, as Mr Row's argument contends, that considerations quite independent of this literary criticism proved the possibility of the evangelical narratives being true; but we think that with impartial minds the grounds for believing those narratives to be not only possibly but actually true would have been grievously weakened. It appears to us to be a perfectly legitimate demand, from which Christians ought not to shrink, that the direct evidence for occurrences of a miraculous character ought to be of far greater weight than that which is sufficient for proving the occurrence of events within ordinary experience. It is, indeed, neither fair nor customary to require evidence of legal strictness to ordinary historical events. But there is one rule of legal evidence of which the justice in historical investigation seems indisputable. It is that a witness's evidence becomes doubtful in proportion as it is out of harmony with ordinary human experience, and

that it requires proportionate corroboration. In the valuable discussion which Professor Greenleaf, late of Harvard University, has prefixed to his 'Testimony of the Evangelists examined by the Rules of Evidence administered in Courts of Justice,' he states the rule in the following terms, with the authority of an approved writer on the Law of Evidence:—

"The credit due to the testimony of witnesses depends upon, firstly, their honesty; secondly, their ability; thirdly, their number and the consistency of their testimony; *fourthly, the conformity of their testimony with experience;* and fifthly, the coincidence of their testimony with collateral circumstances."

Now, the miraculous narratives in the Gospels are certainly out of the range not only of any other recorded experience, but we may go further and say that they are beyond the range of any recorded imagination. We are not sure, indeed, that their very wonder in this respect is not a strong argument in their favour. It is not merely that a few wonders are specially described, as is the case in ordinary legends; but a person is described as moving through sick and afflicted multitudes, and dispensing health, life, and soundness of body and mind at every step. The very touch of his garment is physical life, and his word is spiritual regeneration. It might almost be contended that such a vision authenticates itself; for it is beyond the dreams of mere human hope and imagination. However, to pass this by, it is, we think, perfectly true that such a mass of miraculous manifestations as are recorded in the Gospels—and attempts to minimise them are mere evasions—requires testimony unique in its character and weight. For our part, we are not disposed to question even

Hume's statement of the requirement—that the testimony to establish such miracles should be of such a character that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the miracles it attests. At all events, we are quite confident that the Christian evidence will bear this test; and there is, we think, little difficulty in explaining the reason.

This reason lies simply in the fact that there never have been writers who produce on fair minds such an intense impression of truthfulness, soundness, simplicity, and moral force as the evangelists and the apostolic writers. Here, in the first place, are four witnesses standing up in the face of the world and telling substantially the same story, with the most perfect quietness, solemnity, and confidence; recording words which would pronounce the most awful condemnation on themselves for any deviation from truth, ending with the narrative of the most affecting self-sacrifice in the cause of truth and righteousness which is known to mankind. The four Gospels are a concentrated blaze of moral light, by which the heart of man has been illuminated ever since. They exhibit, at the same time, wherever they can be tested, minute accuracy of observation with respect to the ordinary circumstances of life, and an absence of any sign of mental excitement or disturbance. We do not hesitate to say that it would be something more wonderful than the miracles themselves that such evidence—the testimony from such witnesses—should be mere legendary imagination.

Or take again the case of St Paul. It is significant that it is found essential to any argument like that of Mrs Ward to disparage St Paul's mental capacity. Of course his evidence to the Resurrec-

tion is of peculiar weight. He was in the confidence of the Jewish rulers in the days when he persecuted the Church, and knew therefore the full strength of the case which they could urge against the Resurrection, and nevertheless he devoted his life to a belief in Christ which rested on it. His acknowledged Epistles, moreover, afford direct documentary evidence at first hand to the occurrence, and even the prevalence, of miraculous powers in the early Church—the prevalence of such powers to such an extent as to be liable to abuse, and to need, as in the case of the Corinthians, restraint and repression. It becomes necessary, therefore, to discredit him as a witness; and accordingly the Squire is described as furnishing Robert Elsmere with "a short but masterly analysis of the mental habits and idiosyncrasies of St Paul, *à propos* of St Paul's witness to the Resurrection." He is depicted as "the fiery, fallible man of genius—so weak logically, so strong in poetry, in rhetoric, in moral passion"—a sort of Robert Elsmere, in fact, according to the best construction which can be put on Mrs Ward's portraiture. We confess we cannot descend to the impertinence of defending St Paul against this superfine criticism of German professors, of a dainty English man of letters like Mr Matthew Arnold, and of a lady who measures human nature by the standard of the late Professor Green. St Paul had better be left to describe himself.

"Whereinsoever," he says, "any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool,) I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in

deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?"—2 Cor. xi. 21-29.

Or again:—

"In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."—2 Cor. vi. 4-7.

A man of genius, certainly; but this appeal, in the face of those who knew him well, to his physical endurance, strength of mind, and moral force, is more than sufficient answer to critics who would disparage him as an excitable enthusiast. This is a question to which the maxim eminently applies, "Securus judicat orbis terrarum." It is sufficient to leave the world to judge between St Paul on the one hand and the cynical critic, or the self-satisfied man of letters, on the other. Of the various impertinencies perpetrated by the late Mr Matthew Arnold, one of the worst was his cool assumption of superiority to St Paul, and the confidence with which he subjected the apostle's com-

positions to a condescending criticism, and told him with a benignant air of patronage how he had failed to do justice to his own arguments, and that what the good man really meant to say was so and so. The simple fact of the case is, that while men and women are criticising St Paul, or patronising him, or disparaging him, he goes on telling the world his own witness in his own words; and those who have ears to hear, let them hear him. In point of fact, they do hear him, together with his fellow-witnesses in the Gospels and Epistles. To the end of time there will be minds which no testimony will convince. You cannot turn probable evidence into demonstrative. But in all ages, and in our own as much as in any other, the cardinal evidence for the truth of the Gospel story, and the chief support on which it rests, are found in the overwhelming sense of truth, of veracity, of certainty, produced by the simple testimony of the Evangelists and Apostles. The New Testament is in fact its own evidence, and it forces credence from true and unprejudiced minds by its own inherent power. There are, and it is to be feared there always will be, some minds which are closed, either by intellectual or moral preconceptions, against its light. But it rests securely on the appeal of its great Author: "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?"

In fact, as we have already noticed, it is Elsmere's weakened sense of the personal supremacy of our Lord which is the decisive element in his lapse, and Mrs Ward is clear-sighted enough to bring this point out with remarkable force. In the chapter headed "Crisis," Elsmere's decision is precipitated by a conversation in which an enthusiastic young Roman Catholic maintains a vehement argument in defence of the Christian faith

with the Squire, and he is startled, on reflection, to find how little sympathy he had felt with the Christian plea:—

"Then gradually it became clear to him. A month ago every word of that hectic young pleader for Christ and the Christian certainties would have roused within him a leaping, passionate sympathy—the heart's yearning assent, even when the intellect was most perplexed. Now that inmost strand had given way. Suddenly, the disintegrating force he had been so pitifully, so blindly, holding at bay, had penetrated once for all into the sanctuary. What had happened to him had been the first real failure of *feeling*, the first treachery of the *heart*. . . . His soul had been dead within him."

The italics are the author's, and they are significant. Elsmere has lost, or has never possessed in sufficient force, the sense of the unique ascendency of our Lord over the heart as well as the intellect, and the personal authority on which faith ultimately rests is gone. "Every human soul," he says to himself afterwards, "in which the voice of God makes itself felt, enjoys, "equally with Jesus of Nazareth, the divine Sonship, "and '*miracles do not happen!*'"—above all, there has never been the moral miracle of *one* in human form, free from the moral weakness and the fallibility of mankind. So, as he walks home by night from his visit to Oxford to seek advice from Mr Grey, or rather support in the decision he has made, the Master, to whom he formerly rendered the homage and absolute submission of an imperfect human being to his Lord and God, "moves towards him in the guise of common manhood, laden like his fellows with the pathetic weight of human weakness and human ignorance." There is the key to the whole story and to the whole controversy. With equal clearness of view Mrs Ward

has described it as the secret of Catherine's faith, that nothing can shake her absolute allegiance and worship towards her Master. When a man can be brought to think that Jesus Christ "had his dreams, his delusions, with his fellows," and that St Paul was no more than "a fallible man of genius," "logically weak," the foundations of his faith in Christianity are gone. But as long as men and women are awed into submission, love, and trust by that Divine voice, reduced to lay their hands upon their mouths in that supreme Presence, conscious in themselves of a sinfulness, a weakness and ignorance, under which, but for His gracious invitation, they would hardly dare lift up their eyes to Him, much less criticise, or, worst of all, assume a capacity to approve Him—as long as that Sacred Figure stands before us in living lineaments in the Gospels, while His Apostles, in Epistles which are instinct in every line with truth and soberness, bear their solemn testimony to Him, so long will the Christian faith live and grow. If critics and sceptics raise objections, it is the duty of Christian apologists to offer answers and explanations. But it is the Gospels themselves which in the end refute the critics, and the testimony of the Apostles wins the verdict of the world by its own inherent weight. The object of Christian apologists should be chiefly to remove difficulties which prevent these witnesses obtaining a hearing, or which prejudice their testimony. If Elsmere had consulted his wife in time, she could, after all, have given him the very help he needed. She might have revived in his heart the submissive allegiance due to her Master and his, and have quickened his sense of the intense moral and spiritual claim of St Paul and his fellow-witnesses.

It remains to say something of the "new religion," the reconstructed faith, which Elsmere is represented as endeavouring to substitute in the place of the old faith. If, indeed, the attempted demolition be vain, it is in one sense waste of time to consider the proposed substitute. But some brief consideration of it may be worth while, as serving to illustrate further the essential hollowness of the whole process of thought which is exhibited with such self-confidence. Very few observations upon it, however, will be necessary. The first is that there is not a single good object proposed by the New Brotherhood which could not be, and which is not, attained by the Christian Church. Elsmere's personal devotion to the moral welfare and elevation of the artisans of the East End is admirable. But it is exhibited every day by Christian clergymen; and the main difference is, that the Church has produced results, again and again, such as are imagined in Elsmere's case, and is producing them at this moment, while no similar results have been produced by any other agency. So far as the influence of this book goes, it would break the springs of the charitable devotion by which the darkest places of the earth, at home and abroad, are actually being illuminated and purified, and it offers us nothing in exchange which has a real existence. "*Bella geri placuit nullos habitura triumphos.*" Create a new Brotherhood, if you please, based on a reconstructed Christianity, and show it to us at work, and you will have some right to ask men to listen to you. But it is, after all, a reckless levity which does its worst to cut at the roots of the best religious life of the world—the life of women like Catherine Elsmere, for example—and can offer nothing in exchange but a mere romance. If any one

wants to establish a new religion, let him actually establish it. That is the only reasonable way of supplanting the old—the only way consistent with a due sense of the blessings conferred by the old one on feeble and suffering humanity. If Elsmere's Brotherhood were a living force, there might be some justification for this book. As it is not—there may be excuses for the lady who writes it, but justification there is none.

But it must further be observed that the principles and practices of the New Brotherhood are themselves, in an extravagant degree, of that unhistorical and arbitrary character which the authoress would attribute to Christianity. In the new faith, we are told (vol. iii. p. 359), there are only two articles—

"In thee, O Eternal, have I put my trust,"

and

"This do in remembrance of me."

So that out of the whole mass of our Lord's sayings recorded in the Gospels, the words, "This do in remembrance of me," are selected as the distinctive article of the new faith; for the only significance of the first "article" consists in its being severed from its foundations in the Jewish and Christian revelations. To what purpose, moreover, is this saying applied? We are told that it is used in "what is perhaps the most characteristic, the most binding practice of the New Brotherhood. It is that which has raised most angry comment, cries of 'profanity,' 'wanton insult,' and what not." An example is given in the scene which follows. One of Elsmere's chief supporters is calling on a member of the Brotherhood, who is a carpenter. This man and his

family are standing at their dinner-table, about to commence the meal:—

"The father lifted his right hand.

"The Master said, '*This do in remembrance of me.*'

"The children stooped for a moment in silence, then the youngest said slowly, in a little softened Cockney voice, that touched me extraordinarily, '*Jesus, we remember Thee always.*'

"It was the appointed response."

Now, apart from the question of "profanity," what it is most pertinent to ask is, What foundation there is for prescribing such a practice, and the use of these words, for such a purpose? The only evidence we have of our Lord having said "This do in remembrance of me" testifies to His having used the words as the sequel of others; and these others describe what was to be done in remembrance of Him. If there be one record of our Lord's acts and sayings in the Gospels which has an especial strength of attestation, it is the account of the institution of the Last Supper. In that account the words "This do in remembrance of me" refer to the solemn distribution of bread and wine for the purpose of communion with His body and blood, and the cup is stated to be "the new testament," or covenant, in His blood. The whole transaction, in its totality, has not only the attestation of three evangelists to support it, but the direct testimony of St Paul, and the unquestionable and unbroken practice of the Christian Church from the earliest times. What we would ask is, not only whether it be not profane, but whether it be consistent with common-sense, to say nothing of common criticism and common canons of historical evidence, to select

arbitrarily half-a-dozen words out of a fully attested record of this kind, and to apply them to a purpose, and in a manner, which are destitute of a shadow of support, either in the records or the practice of the Christian community? A man begins a so-called reformation in the name of History and Criticism, and ends by "reconceiving the Christ," as it is presumptuously called, in defiance of the one most authentic and most solemn reminiscence of the Christ of history. Does any one out of a novel suppose that arbitrary reconstructions of this kind would stand for a moment in the light of reality, and of the real necessities of life? If the proceeding be not profane, it can only be excused as childish.

But if the proposed new faith outdoes any recent attempt of the kind in its arbitrary violence to history and criticism, it is as impotent as any proposed substitute for Christianity in the presence of those great problems of death and a future life, and of deliverance from evil, on which the Christ of reality has thrown so blessed a light. Grey is described as unable to respond on his death-bed to the pious hope of an old relative that it would not be long before they met again, saying he did not doubt God's goodness, "only it seemed to be His will we should be certain of nothing *but Himself.* I ask no more." At Grey's funeral, as Elsmere listens to "the triumphant outbursts of the Christian service, he says to himself, 'Man's hope has grown humbler than this. It keeps now a more modest mien in the presence of the eternal mystery; but is it in truth less real, less sustaining? Let Grey's trust answer for me.'" What a bathos! From the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and St Paul, and the promises of the Saviour—

to "Grey's trust." It is a melancholy comment on the same hollowness that at the death-bed of the Squire, who is passing away in bitterness, loneliness, and cynicism, Elsmere—the former clergyman of his parish—has not one word of consolation, of elevation, of moral influence to bestow upon him. His abandonment of the Christian faith had brought him to this—that he can allow a man whom Grey himself describes as an "inhuman old cynic" to pass into the next world without a single message to his conscience, a single suggestion of repentance, regret, humility, or hope! A darker condemnation of the process through which Elsmere had passed could not well be conceived. But in truth, throughout the record of Elsmere's religious struggles or of his religious reconstruction, there is not, as Mr Gladstone has observed, a trace of any apprehension of that terrible problem of sin, and guilt, and their consequences, to which Christianity brings its primary illumination, and on its answer to which its deepest claims upon sinning as well as suffering humanity are based. While that sense of sin, that craving for forgiveness and salvation from evil, that longing for reconciliation with a righteous God, to which the Gospel appeals, remain elements of the deepest human experience, so long will a philosophical faith which has not a word to say on these subjects be a mere mockery of human hearts and consciences.

One other observation we must needs make, on a point in which, as in several others, the authoress's artistic fidelity of observation has supplied a striking comment on her theories. In the picture she has drawn of the society in which Elsmere moves, she has unconsciously told us that all the truth, all the purity, all the mercy, all the best graces of the heart, are to

be found in Christian homes—Grey's character, the only apparent exception, was formed under strong Christian influences—and that the society in which the enemies of the faith are nursed has its true representatives in a heartless and cynical Squire, an unmanned scholar, a profligate woman of the world, and in *salons* held under her protection, where a pure-minded woman like Catherine cannot be present without hearing conversation which is an insult to her. "Oh! those women and that talk," she justly exclaims, after her first evening with Madame de Netteville—"hateful!" She is right; and if Elsmere could attend such a *salon* a second time, and be interested and flattered by association with such creatures, he fully deserved the insult which he afterwards suffered at Madame de Netteville's hands. But it is to be hoped that, in the emphasis which it gives to this contrast between the Christian life of Catherine's family in Westmoreland, and the inhumanity and profligacy of the society to the seductions of which Elsmere's faith yields, the book may convey to the large circles by which it has been read at least one wholesome lesson. The time seems to have come when people who wish to live Christian lives, and to maintain Christian thoughts, must hold themselves aloof from a society in which, as Mrs Ward says, "everything is an open question, and all confessions of faith are more or less bad taste." Life at the Universities for young men, life in ordinary society for young women, seems fast becoming, under the influence of an unscrupulous philosophy and literature, too mischievous or dangerous to be encountered without necessity. The Christian world will have to draw a fence around itself, and to ostracise books, and philosophers, and institutions alike,

by which the bloom is taken off all the most gracious and tender instincts of a Christian soul. The victory in this story, to our minds, remains with Catherine. She wins all the more regard by virtue of the tender womanly love which restrains her in her long struggle against her husband's revolt, and which hopes all things of his present and his future. But her instinctive revulsion from men who are "aliens from the household of faith, enemies to the cross of Christ," her distrust of an unbridled passion for art and artistic self-assertion, and her loathing for loose and unwomanly company, command our unreserved allegiance, and she remains the one redeeming figure in the picture of an otherwise demoralised and demoralising society.

THE SPEAKER'S COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT.[1]

It throws some discredit upon either the candour or the thoroughness of modern sceptical critics that the two first volumes of the 'Speaker's Commentary upon the New Testament' have not received more attention. They constitute the most important contribution which has yet been made in this country to the chief theological controversy of our day; and we have also no hesitation in saying that none of the critical works

[1] From the 'Quarterly Review,' No. 302, April 1881; an article on *The Speaker's Commentary on the New Testament, vols. i. and ii., containing the Four Gospels and the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. London*, 1878, 1880.

which have been published abroad afford more valuable materials for forming a sound judgment on that controversy. The learned and conscientious labour of Canon Cook, alike as editor and as contributor, appears, we think, nowhere to so much advantage as in this portion of his great undertaking, and it is a matter for congratulation that his share in it has, from causes in other respects to be regretted, been larger than was originally contemplated. In addition to his general supervision, he is solely responsible for the notes on the two last chapters of St Matthew, and on the whole of St Mark's Gospel. The Bishop of St David's, moreover, was unable, owing to the pressure of his episcopal duties, to prepare for the press his Commentary on St Luke; and Canon Cook consequently had to revise that portion of the work, and accepts the ultimate responsibility for it. He has also furnished the Introduction to the Acts of the Apostles. The other portions of these two volumes have been contributed by scholars of the highest distinction. The Introduction to the first three Gospels is written by the Archbishop of York, Dr Thomson; the Commentary on St Matthew is by the late Dean Mansel; the Introduction to St John's Gospel, with the Commentary upon it, is by Dr Westcott, the learned Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge[1]; and the Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles is by the Bishop of Chester,[2] well known as one of the ablest of recent Regius Professors of Divinity at Oxford. No body of scholars of equal distinction has yet been associated together for the purpose of commenting on the evangelical and apostolic history.

A work which possesses the authority of such

[1] Now Bishop of Durham. [2] Dr Jacobson, since deceased.

names would on that ground alone claim the best attention of critics; and a survey of its contents should be sufficient to command for it at once the careful study of any impartial reader. The first point to be observed is that it is very much more than a commentary. At the present moment, on the eve of the publication of that version of the New Testament on which the company of revisers has been so long engaged at Westminster, it deserves to be remembered that, from the first, it has been a leading principle of the 'Speaker's Commentary' to furnish in the Notes all requisite corrections both of the text and of the authorised translation. In fact, it led the way in the work of revision, and when the new version appears, the English reader will find in this Commentary a very useful standard for testing the variations from the old version. But this is an incidental advantage. The consideration of chief importance is that, in the Introductions to the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, these volumes furnish a masterly and comprehensive review of that controversy respecting the origin and trustworthiness of the Scriptures of the New Testament which during the last two generations has prevailed abroad, and which M. Renan and the author of 'Supernatural Religion' have recently popularised in this country. Canon Cook, in particular, is perfectly acquainted with every turn in this long and intricate debate; he is as familiar with its philosophical as with its purely critical aspect; and it may be doubted whether there is any scholar similarly competent to review its checkered course and its general results. In their special fields Dr Thomson and Dr Westcott are pre-eminent; and in their respective Introductions the reader may rely on due account

having been taken of all important contributions to the subject by Continental scholars, from the opening of modern criticism at the commencement of this century, to the last phase of the chameleon-like ingenuity of M. Renan. These Introductions, indeed, possess both the substance and the interest of independent works on these momentous topics. They are of very considerable extent. Combined, they would form an ample octavo volume, and their value is independent in a great measure of the detailed commentary on the text. Dr Thomson's Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels has, indeed, already been reprinted in an interesting and instructive volume of "Collected Papers," recently published under the title, 'Word, Work, and Will'; but at a time when so much attention is attracted to this subject, it might be very serviceable to reprint those of Canon Cook and Dr Westcott, and to combine them with that of the Archbishop, so as to deprive the public of all excuse for not applying some sober English sense and sound learning to check the wild speculations now prevalent. But M. Renan may come to London, and puzzle and perplex fashionable audiences by his arbitrary and reckless paradoxes; the newspapers may hasten to give summaries of his lectures, and to disperse his last new theories among a public wholly incapable of forming a judgment upon them without assistance; and all the while no attention is paid to the invaluable stores of learning and historic argument to be found in the pages before us. With the mass of readers this indifference may be charitably ascribed to the old and simple preference of what is new to what is true. But critics like M. Renan, or the author of 'Supernatural Religion,' or the German writers who

notice in their numerous 'Zeitschriften' every fugitive production of their own professors, are not similarly excusable.

It is more than time, indeed, to observe that there has hitherto been something quite incomprehensible in the inattention paid by the modern school of German critics to the work of English scholars in the field of Church History and of criticism. For example, it is a kind of regulation that every manual of Church History in Germany should commence with a notice of all previous works of any consequence on the same subject. But it is extremely rare to find in such introductory notices any mention whatever of the great works of Dean Milman—works which, alike in their research and their historic power, stand in the front rank of their class, and which, for their part, exhibit a thorough and candid study of all the important productions of German scholars. No text-book of Church History enjoys a higher reputation in Germany than that of the venerable Dr Karl Hase. Its tenth edition appeared in 1877, and it records up to the latest date the appearance of both German and French works on the subject of any consequence. But the latest English contribution to Church History mentioned in it is the pious but antiquated work of Milner, and neither Milman nor Robertson are named. From an article, indeed, which we shall notice further on, published last month by a leading German scholar, calling attention to the most important discovery made for many years in the field of New Testament criticism, we may indulge the hope that this indifference to the work of English and American divines is passing away. But as yet, it would seem as if on all subjects connected with Christian history, especially that of early times,

German and Continental thought had for the last generation been unable to move in any other groove than that of the speculations set on foot by Baur and his school. Even this does not excuse the neglect of Milman, for the last edition of his 'History of Christianity' contains, both in the preface and in the body of the work, most instructive observations on the views of the Tübingen divines and of their followers. But the chief point of interest to German scholars seems to have been the theories which are at stake, not the sacred writings or the facts of ecclesiastical history themselves. Among Englishmen, on the other hand, whatever their occasional defects from the point of view of technical knowledge, a sounder instinct has been predominant. They have been concerned in the first instance with the vital truths and facts of Christian history, and they have very properly allowed their apprehension of these realities to determine, in many instances, the weight to be allowed to theories manifestly inconsistent with them. We have undoubtedly learned very much from German criticism, and shall learn much more. But German writers, as some of the ablest among them are beginning to acknowledge, have also much to learn from the solid historic sense of Englishmen. The leading scholars in this country are certainly not liable to the accusation of neglecting German learning, and it is time the Germans paid some similar attention to the results of English thought.

It is from this point of view, as a rare combination of the strong religious and historic sense of Englishmen with all the results of recent investigations abroad, that the volumes before us deserve to be so warmly commended to the reader. It is sometimes said in disparagement of this and similar publications in

England that they are "apologetic." If it be implied that the writers feel bound to maintain foregone critical conclusions, the insinuation is unjustifiable; but so far as it is meant that they are written with a conscious realisation of truths which the more prominent class of foreign critics disregard, it is but a recognition of what we have just indicated as the chief merit of English thought on such subjects. Putting aside, indeed, the question of acquaintance with dogmatic theology, we have no hesitation in saying that it is the characteristic advantage of Biblical scholars in England, that they generally possess a more vivid apprehension of the spirit and practical meaning of the Scriptures than is usual abroad, even among the learned. M. Renan, for instance, speaking in his last work, 'L'Église Chrétienne' (pp. 50, 51), of the defects of the "fourth Gospel," mentions "la prolixité, l'aridité, résultant d'interminables discours pleins de métaphysique abstruse, et d'allégations personnelles." An English divine, and we may add any intelligent English reader, must needs approach such a work as St John's Gospel from a directly contrary point of view; and the mere fact of a critic like M. Renan expressing such an opinion cannot but be regarded by thoughtful Englishmen as disqualifying him from forming any trustworthy judgment on questions of internal evidence relating to the Gospels. An English clergyman, for instance, knows as a matter of fact that, so far from the discourses in St John's Gospel being "arid," "prolix," or "metaphysical," they are among the portions of the Gospels which are the best appreciated by the simplest members of his flock; he knows that in visiting poor sick people, in suffering and in death, there are no words which come more home to their hearts, or give

them greater comfort, than those utterances of our Lord which so offend M. Renan's critical taste. We are disposed to attribute a good deal of this divergence between the points of view of the scholars of the two nations to the far greater prevalence in England of a general popular acquaintance with the text of the Holy Scriptures. A remarkable testimony to the advantage we possess in this respect has recently been borne by a most competent and unprejudiced witness. One of the most useful of recent German contributions to the study of the Scriptures is the 'Dictionary of Biblical Antiquities,' now being issued under the editorship of Dr Riehm, in conjunction with other distinguished scholars in Germany. In the preface to that work this learned writer says that—

"German evangelical theology may, indeed, always claim the honour of being the pioneer and guide of the theologians of other nations in the scientific and learned investigation of the Bible. But this," he adds, "has been of little benefit to our own German national culture. Knowledge and understanding of the Bible, which constitute so essential an element of religious culture, remain by far its weakest side. In this respect we Germans stand, for instance, far behind the English."

This remarkable result is doubtless due, in the main, to the unique privilege which Englishmen have enjoyed of hearing the Bible incessantly read to them in the public services of the Church. Its words have been stamped upon their minds by constant oral repetition, and the deep import of the sacred language has thus penetrated into their inmost thoughts and feelings. Among the wonderful achievements of the English statesmen and reformers of the sixteenth century, this perhaps is one of the very greatest. By one grand act of legislation, they stamped

the words and the leading ideas of the sacred writers upon ten successive generations of Englishmen, and upon the whole English-speaking world. No other nation whatever has been similarly imbued with the spirit of the Scriptures, and none other feels and thinks to an equal degree in the language of the Bible. The consequence is that English scholars instinctively deal with the Scriptures under a vivid apprehension of the living meaning they bear to the hearts of the people at large; they are forced, by the very atmosphere in which they have been brought up, and in which they live and work, to start, in all their Biblical studies, from this point of view. German scholars, on the contrary, being sensible of no such popular feeling around them, and not having been educated in such an atmosphere, are able to approach questions of Scriptural criticism in a spirit which is too much removed from practical life, and too purely intellectual. To an Englishman, the minute and unsparing analysis of the Scriptures to be found in many foreign works seems a kind of vivisection; to the German it is too often like the mere dissection of a dead product of antiquity. In this sense, no doubt, the English scholar and divine has an apologetic instinct about him; but, instead of this being deprecated, it ought to be regarded as one of his strong points. He knows something of the living force of the documents with which he is dealing, and he has a deep suspicion of critical speculations which are insensible to it. In approaching the subject in this spirit, he appears to us to be altogether in the right, and to possess an unquestionable advantage over a critic who is more concerned with the form than with the matter of the sacred

writings. The designation of "the higher criticism" is too frequently claimed for a mere technical and philological acuteness in analysing the text of the Scriptures. But, in reality, the substance is superior to the form, and the highest criticism is that which is the most capable of entering into the spirit of a writer, and of interpreting the details of his work by the light of his main purpose and of his animating ideas. In this respect English scholars and divines may with confidence challenge comparison with the leading writers of Germany and France.

In approaching the question of the authenticity of the books ascribed to the four evangelists, and of the general credibility of the history of the New Testament, this really high criticism is eminently necessary. The first point to be considered is that which is too often the very last to be taken into account by the negative speculation which has of late been so popular. What is the general character and purpose of the four books which are commonly known as "The Four Gospels"? If it be assumed at the outset that they were intended for narratives of the life of our Lord, they may be estimated and contrasted in proportion to their fulfilment of this function; and their agreement or difference in points of chronology, of incident, or of language, may become the main subject of interest. But, as the Archbishop of York begins by pointing out,[1] this is obviously a misconception. Not a little obscurity, perhaps, has been cast over the matter by the habit into which people have long fallen of applying the word "Gospel" as a designation of the book which contains the evangelical message, and thus of speaking

[1] Introduction, pp. vii, viii.

in plural of "The Gospels." In the mind of the evangelists there is but one Gospel, and they are each expounding it from their several points of view. "The Gospel" is "the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God," which He commissioned His apostles to preach to every creature.

In other words, the four "Gospels," as we now call them, claim to be regarded, in the first instance, as records of the oral teaching of the Apostles and Evangelists; and it is remarkable that they closely correspond in this respect with the examples of that teaching presented in the Acts of the Apostles. Take, for instance, St Peter's summary of the Gospel message to Cornelius:—

"The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: . . . that word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judæa, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly."—Acts x. 36-40.

A more accurate summary of the general purport of any one of the four Gospels could not have been given. They are not, therefore, literary works, produced in study and retirement, designed simply to give a historical account of the events of our Saviour's life. They arose out of an immediate practical purpose, and they were designed to bring home certain practical convictions to those who read or heard them. In this respect they conform to the character of nearly all the

books of the sacred volume—those, at all events, of the New Testament. They are struck out, as it were, by the necessities of actual life, and they are instinct with the vital energy thus infused into them.

Any criticism, therefore, which discusses the so-called four Gospels as mere biographical narratives, will be likely to miss the real causes of their origin, and of their several peculiarities. The numerous efforts which have been made of late years to compose a "Life of Christ" out of the records of the evangelists have had at least one unfortunate tendency—that of casting the colour of a similar design over the Gospels themselves. It is, indeed, very questionable whether so much as an approach to success in such attempts can ever be made. It is very well to undertake to write the life of a man like ourselves, or even of a man like an Apostle, who was under supernatural influences. Such a task, indeed, is always one of the most difficult to execute with any justice. In any case it is supremely hard to preserve the right proportion between the several influences which determine the course of a man's life, to estimate the relative force of motives and the real significance of acts, so as to paint a true picture, with the lights and shadows duly assigned. But still, in all other cases, the motives, the words, and the deeds are somewhat on a level with ourselves. They may be far greater and better than our own, but we are capable of a sufficient approach to them to allow of our forming some fair conception of their nature. But who can venture, with any confidence, to estimate the proportions, the significance, and the real order of a life at once human and divine? One of the most remarkable characteristics, in fact, of the Gospels themselves is that, so far from offering a life of Christ, they would

rather appear deliberately and scrupulously to abstain from any attempt to describe that life. What they profess to give us is the Gospel—the Gospel which He preached, and those words and acts of His which constituted or revealed the Gospel. But He Himself is treated with a reverent reserve, and details are continually withheld on which a natural curiosity would have desired satisfaction. Notoriously, the evangelists are silent respecting by far the greater part of His life on earth—a part of it which, as might well have been thought, would have had a profound interest for us. Their reserve is not less remarkable in their abstinence from placing their own interpretations on His words and acts. They report them, and leave them to speak for themselves; as though knowing that they would be infinite in their significance, and would possess an ever-varying application to different minds and different ages. A criticism which attempts to judge such narratives by a merely literary standard, and by the mechanical tests of verbal analysis, is foredoomed to failure.

Now this being the character of the Gospels, it seems unfortunate that to the first three there has, throughout all recent criticism, been given a designation which of itself tends to withdraw attention from their more vital characteristics. They have been designated "The Synoptic Gospels," as though they were in the first instance to be regarded as constructed on the same general plan, and were to be judged and criticised with reference to it. They have consequently been compared most minutely with each other, not simply with a view of contrasting their individual purpose and spirit, but with that of analysing the details of their structure, and accounting for their formal and mechanical variations; and on this

comparatively barren problem the labours of German critics have to an incredible extent been absorbed and exhausted. Attention having been once withdrawn from the essential spirit which animates the evangelists, and concentrated on textual peculiarities, an unlimited field has been opened to the ingenuities of verbal criticism, while the balancing influence of larger historic considerations has been sacrificed. There is, of course, room for infinite speculation in detail on the reasons by which variations of language in the narratives of the evangelists are to be explained. Of such speculations Archbishop Thomson gives a striking illustration by comparing the two following parallel passages from St Mark and St Luke:[1]—

"Mark i.	"Luke iv.
35. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.	42. And when it was day, He departed and went into a desert place; and the people sought Him, and came unto Him, and stayed Him, that He should not depart from them.
36. And Simon and they that were with Him followed after Him.	
37. And when they had found Him, they said unto Him, All men seek for Thee.	
38. And He said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.	43. And He said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.
39. And He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils."	44. And He preached in the synagogues of Galilee."

Now, says the Archbishop,

"these words of Mark contain several striking points. St Luke says that the multitude sought Jesus; St Mark

[1] Introduction, p. xviii.

mentions that Simon and the disciples pursued Him, told Him of the multitudes seeking Him, and pressed Him to return. The verb 'followed' is in the singular in the best MSS., as though Peter followed, with the rest as mere companions; but these, summed up as 'the rest,' were James, John, and Andrew. The very early rising, and the prayer which was the object of it, are in Mark alone. The proposal to make a circuit in Galilee, the completeness of the circuit, rests on St Mark's narrative. Mark is very graphic and distinct. Luke more general, yet clear. Matthew is wholly silent. How will criticism deal with these differences? Holtzmann regards this as one of the most decisive proofs of the originality of Mark. He points out how the several points have been obscured in Luke. Wittichen regards the passage of St Mark as original, omitted by St Matthew as being needless after the Sermon on the Mount. Godet can understand all the differences on the supposition that the two narratives had a common origin in traditional preaching, but not on the supposition that one copied from another. Ernest Bunsen has no doubt that St Mark copied from St Luke, adding a few touches from St Matthew (viii. 14). Bleek, quite gratuitously, casts a doubt on the accuracy of St Mark, as though he made the next miracle, of healing a leper, take place in one of the synagogues; for which we cannot find a word in St Mark's text. He is confident that in the passages which precede and follow this, the healing of Simon's wife's mother and the cleansing of the leper, Mark had before him the two other Gospels, and used them both. Meyer sees in the mention of Peter's name, the singular verb, and the omission of the other names, the ground of the idea of Peter's pre-eminence; but refuses to see in it any sign of a 'Petrine' tendency in the evangelist. Lastly, Weiss sees an involuntary indication, in this mention of Peter, of the source whence the evangelist drew his information; while he finds clear tokens of the reflecting editor in St Luke, who passes over the pursuit of the disciples, intensifies the expression of duty, 'must preach,' and substitutes for the more

ambiguous 'came I forth,' the clearer reference to the heavenly commission, in the words 'am I sent.'"

The Archbishop naturally asks what we are to think of these varieties of opinion, but that the so-called science which arrives at them is founded on no sure principles? All that is certain is, that of two accounts, completely in harmony with each other, one is graphic and full of detail, the other more general and with less minuteness of handling. One critic concludes that the more general has been formed by throwing off something from the more full; another thinks that in St Mark we have a later hand, with more literary skill, filling up with skilful touches a narrative that requires this treatment for its literary interest. One hears the voice of Peter, a living witness of the scene. Another detects some mere epitomiser or editor, making the best of the materials at his command. All these conjectures cannot be true; and it may be confidently said that common-sense would in any other case at once condemn any such elaborate inferences from such slight variations of expression.

It is only natural that the general conclusions which German critics have drawn from premisses of this kind should prove conflicting and mutually destructive. We take, for instance, the Archbishop's summary[1] of the dispute respecting the relation of St Mark's Gospel to the others. Hilgenfeld, one of the acutest of the disciples of Baur, thinks the thoroughgoing dependence of the Gospel of St Mark on the Gospel of St Matthew is undeniable. Reuss, another very learned and acute writer, thinks he

[1] Introduction, p. xxxvi.

has shown that St Mark bears everywhere the stamp of originality, whilst St Matthew presents numerous and various signs of the revision of a second hand. Keim considers that the Gospel of St Mark aims at uniting the two great Gospels; and that, while in the first part of his work St Mark follows St Luke, in the second he follows St Matthew. Volkmar regards St Mark's Gospel as a work of a Pauline spirit and tendency, aimed against the Judaic tendency of the Apocalypse. Hilgenfeld strongly denies this, draws attention to the Jewish side of the Gospel, and considers that, far from its being the expression of either a Petrine or a Pauline tendency, it represents the harmony and conciliation of the two principles. What conclusion can be drawn from this mass of contradictory speculation, but that the evidence on which such writers rely affords them no solid ground for the conclusions they deduce, and that their whole method is untrustworthy?

We regret to say, however, that one of the wildest and most presumptuous examples of this style of criticism has been recently put forward in an important publication in this country. The theory of an original Gospel from which our three first Gospels were derived has been advocated by many writers; but it has been reserved for an English scholar to reduce it unconsciously *ad absurdum* in an attempt to restore this original Gospel by a mechanical, not an intellectual, process. In an article on the Gospels, which has unfortunately been admitted into the new edition of the 'Encyclopædia Britannica,' Dr Abbott has started the theory of the existence of a "Triple Tradition," as he is pleased to call it, which can be recovered from the texts of the three first Gospels. He picks out all the words and

bits of words—literally portions of words—which they have in common, and then practically assumes that these must all have formed not merely a part of an original tradition which they all used, but all that was of importance in it. This "triple tradition" has the advantage, from his point of view, that "it omits the genealogies, miraculous incarnation, and the picturesque details of the infancy," and that it "suddenly terminates without any record of the appearance of Jesus to His disciples."

"However we may regret this, it is," we are told, "perhaps what may be naturally expected on the hypothesis that we have before us an early tradition, originated at a time when the numerous manifestations of Jesus after His death were still attested by living witnesses; when as yet it had been found impossible to reduce the experiences and impressions of those who had seen Him—impressions necessarily variable and transient, blended with fear and with an excitement bordering on ecstasy—to a consistent and historical shape; and when it had not yet been found necessary to define and harden the narrative so as to adapt it for the purpose of meeting doubts and objections."

The motive for thus eliminating from the only trustworthy record the elements characteristic of the several evangelists is sufficiently evident. But the baselessness of the theory needs little exposure, and it is very well demolished by Dr Salmon, the eminent divine and mathematician of Trinity College, Dublin, in an interesting volume of sermons he has just printed.[1] Such a process, as Dr Salmon observes, involves the assumption that, on the supposition that one original tradition existed and that it was made use of by three subsequent compilers, each of these

[1] Non-miraculous Christianity and other Sermons, p. 9.

compilers would be bound to incorporate the whole of it in his work, so that an omission by any one of them justifies us in presuming that what is left out formed no portion of the original tradition. The unreasonableness of such an assumption is evident the moment it is put into words. But even this is not sufficient; for unless we can say with certainty that none of the evangelists made use of the work of another, we cannot be certain that all the things they have in common were independently taken from a common source. Yet assumptions like these supply the foundation upon which is erected the main part of this elaborate contribution, in our chief cyclopædia, to the most important of all critical and theological topics. In the presence of criticism of this kind, and of a vast deal of that of Germany, it is impossible, in spite of the difference of the subject, not to be reminded of Sterne's description of the connoisseurs,

"whose heads, sir, are stuck so full of rules and compasses, and have that eternal propensity to apply them upon all occasions, that a work of genius had better go to the devil at once than stand to be pricked and tortured to death by 'em."

We confess that in reading German critics on these subjects, we are again and again tempted to join in Sterne's concluding exclamation:—

"Grant me patience, just heaven! Of all the cants which are canted in this canting world — though the cant of hypocrites may be the worst—the cant of criticism is the most tormenting."

After all, what is the main motive of these ingenious schemes? They are for the most part prompted by a

prior assumption that we have not, and cannot have, the genuine testimony of eye-witnesses to the extraordinary facts which the Gospels narrate. The history of advanced criticism as applied to the Gospels and to the Acts of the Apostles, is one of a succession of devices for getting rid of the miraculous and the supernatural in the records. First, an attempt was made, while accepting the Gospel records as in substance true, to deprive them of their miraculous character by naturalistic explanations of the facts. This theory was effectually exploded by Strauss. He felt that for any such purpose it was necessary to get rid altogether of the historical character of the Gospels, and he endeavoured to account for them by the supposition that the whole story grew up as a myth. This method of cutting the knot was, however, felt to be insufficient, and subsequent efforts, of which M. Renan is the most popular exponent, have, like Dr Abbott's, endeavoured to separate a kernel of original fact, which, however wonderful, need not be so very miraculous, from subsequent accretions of legend. But, as Dr Salmon forcibly argues in the sermon to which we have already referred, no such attempts can get rid of the fact that the belief in one stupendous miracle, at all events, lies at the root of the whole history of the Church. If there ever existed a Gospel which did not contain the miraculous, it must certainly have been earlier than the Epistles of St Paul; for in St Paul's mind our Lord's resurrection is one of the most certain of facts, and is the keystone of his whole preaching: "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." But it is unnecessary to come down to even so

comparatively early a date as that of St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. For whether men believe or disbelieve in our Lord's resurrection, there can be no doubt at all about the date at which such a belief arose. To quote again from Dr Salmon (p. 10) :—

"If a year had elapsed, if six months had elapsed, from the time at which our Lord had died on the cross the death of shame, and if during all that time no sign had clouded over the completeness of the triumph of His enemies; if His followers had for so long a time been forced to acquiesce in the conviction that He who had saved others had been unable to save Himself, we may say with certainty that it would have been impossible to revive their crushed expectations, and that one who should then first come to them with the story of a resurrection would find them in no state of mind to give it credence. Or, take the thing another way. They who denying a real resurrection of Jesus attempt to explain the rise of a belief in it, appeal to the fact that there often remains on the mental retina the image of a luminous object after the object itself has been withdrawn. The face long familiar and long loved refuses to vanish from our mental vision, or is ever starting up unbidden. So the minds of those to whom Jesus was inexpressibly dear, and who had built on Him all their hopes, could not let His image go. Their prophet could not die. Thus, whether or not Jesus of Nazareth actually did rise again, it was inevitable that His followers should believe that He did. I shall not discuss whether or not this explanation is sufficient; but it is evident that the exaltation of mind which it assumes on the part of our Lord's disciples only belongs to the time when their loss was still fresh. It is not conceivable after the time when that first poignancy of grief, which refuses to realise its loss, is succeeded by that dull pain which confesses that life has got to be lived on after all that made it dear has gone."

Thus, as Dr Salmon puts it, "if we are forbidden to hold the article of the present creed of Christians, 'On

the third day He rose again from the dead,'" we shall be compelled to substitute, "On or about the third day it came to be believed that He rose again from the dead." It follows that the facts of chronology allow no place at all for a non-miraculous Gospel. At the very earliest date at which our Lord's life and death can have been put into writing, the story of the resurrection must have formed an essential part of it. No criticism, therefore, can help us to eliminate this miracle from any conceivable record. But if so, then certainly nothing is gained in point of credibility by paring down records of secondary miracles in other portions of the narrative. The plain truth of the matter is, that we must either accept the narratives of the Gospels as they stand, or we must confess ourselves practically reduced to ignorance respecting the momentous subjects with which they are occupied. It is conceivable, certainly, that criticism of a higher type than we have been discussing—a criticism which does not seek the living among the dead by expecting to discover the relation between great writers in the number of syllables common to two or more of them —may some day achieve the feat of detecting in our Gospels fragments of older documents. The preface to St Luke's Gospel renders it unquestionable that such documents existed, and it is no way improbable that they were used. But we have certainly no greater guarantee for the truth of the older document than of the later ones. Such a document is by the hypothesis anonymous, and we have no means of ascertaining either its origin or its authority. If we give up the authenticity of the Gospels in their present form, we may amuse ourselves, like M. Renan, with writing as many romances on the subject as we please, picking

out whatever facts we like, some at one time and some at another, no matter whether consistently or not; but we have no means of constructing an account of the life of our Lord, or of the labours of His Apostles, which can lay any claim whatever to a historical character.

Accordingly, the first question at issue in the present day, for all sober-minded persons, is practically the same as in the last century—in the days of Lardner and Paley: Have we adequate reason for believing that the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles were written by the persons whose names they bear, and that the testimony of these persons is to be trusted? On the second question we apprehend there will practically be no dispute nowadays. The veracity and the good sense of the first preachers and teachers of Christianity is beyond question with any persons with whom it is now worth while to argue. The only difference between our day and that of Paley is, that the weight of the argument has for a time been shifted to the prior question—whether St Matthew, St Mark, St Luke, and St John did really write the books in question. It is for the admirable way in which this plain question is handled that we recommend the Commentary before us so strongly to public attention. But it may not be amiss to offer a few observations upon the order in which the problem may be most conveniently approached. Perhaps, for the purpose of establishing the authenticity of the early history, it is advantageous to commence with the Acts of the Apostles. There is no practical question that this book was written by St Luke. Of course it is only too well known that Baur and his school have endeavoured to make out that it is a production of later date than apostolic times, designed to facilitate a reconciliation between the

antagonistic sections of the Christian Church who adhered to the special views of St Peter and St Paul respectively. But it is not sufficiently well known, perhaps, by those who are inclined to welcome the destructive effect of these views, that the theory is now abandoned even by Renan. After a full consideration of the objections by the school of Tübingen, Renan says, "Je persiste à croire que le dernier rédacteur des Actes est bien le disciple de Paul qui dit *nous* aux derniers chapitres,"[1]—in other words, as he himself goes on to argue, no other than St Luke. But there is also no practical question that the author of the Acts is also the author of the third Gospel, and of that Gospel, moreover, in the form and with the essential characteristics which it now possesses. As Canon Cook says with justice, both points—the identity of authorship of the Gospel and the Acts, and the authorship by a companion of St Paul—

"are now generally received both in Germany and France, and that not only by scholars who accept unreservedly the statements and notices of Holy Writ, but by those who subject all its contents to a searching and jealous scrutiny, even by many who reject without scruple any facts involving the recognition of supernatural interposition, and who readily admit attacks upon the character and authority of the chief representatives of early Christendom."

He mentions the names of Credner and Bleek in Germany, and of Renan in France, as illustrating this statement. Renan's conclusion, in 'Les Apôtres,' p. x, is again worth quotation:—

"Une chose hors de doute, c'est que les Actes ont eu le même auteur que le troisième Évangile, et sont une continu-

[1] Les Apôtres, p. xiv.

ation de cet Évangile. . . . Les préfaces qui sont en tête des deux écrits, la dédicace de l'un et de l'autre à Théophile, la parfaite ressemblance du style et des idées fournissent à cet égard d'abondantes démonstrations."

Credner similarly says that the common peculiarities of the Gospel and the Acts "prove irrefragably that the author of the third Gospel, the physician Luke, must on no account be separated from the author of the Acts of the Apostles."

Now let it be observed to what these confessions amount. In the first place, they involve the admission that the whole apostolic history contained in the Acts of the Apostles was, in its present form—Renan says, as we have seen, in its last redaction—written and revised by one of the most faithful companions of St Paul, by one who was an eye-witness of a great part of the events he relates, and who consequently was in full communication with other Apostles and contemporaries of Apostles. If this were all, one important conclusion would seem to follow at once. The old account of the origin of the Church, which Christians have hitherto accepted on the faith of the Acts of the Apostles, has all the authority of the strongest contemporary evidence, and of a witness who, as Paley argued, staked his life on the truth of his testimony. The whole fabric of the Tübingen school collapses if the admission, or rather the contention, of their most eminent pupil be admitted, and we are back again within the long-standing traditions of Christendom. But it is surprising that a further consequence, equally cogent, is not perceived by those who make these admissions, or who are aware of their having been made. If the Acts of the Apostles be a genuine book, then the Gospel of St Luke is also genuine, and it was

written before the Acts. In other words, in St Luke's Gospel we have a narrative of all the essential parts of our Lord's life and ministry, written by a person who was a contemporary of St Paul and of the other Apostles. The claim of the author in the preface is completely justified:—

"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, *even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word;* it seemed good to me also, *having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first,* to write unto thee in order."

We may go back another step. This introductory statement of St Luke proves that before he wrote the Acts, and before he wrote the Gospel, "many" had taken in hand to reduce to writing, and to set forth in order, the narrative of our Lord's ministry, of His birth, death, and resurrection. Within the lifetime, therefore, of our Lord's own companions and contemporaries, the facts in question were formally recorded at the mouth of eye-witnesses. Even supposing that St Luke's Gospel stood alone, with this evidence of its genuineness, and this appeal to contemporary persons and contemporary documents, it appears to us that no stronger testimony could be adduced in vindication of the real occurrence of the events which it narrates—from the miraculous Conception to the miraculous Ascension.

But it will at once be seen that this consideration leads to still further consequences of the greatest possible weight in the argument. If St Luke's Gospel be the record of the testimony of eye-witnesses, there is certainly nothing in the contents of St

Matthew's and St Mark's Gospels inconsistent with their being also the record of similar testimony. On the contrary, there is every reason to suppose that they are so, and, moreover, that they belong to the same early date as St Luke's own work. Had they been written after St Luke's Gospel had been long enough in existence to be generally known, and by any persons of less authority than their reputed authors, it is improbable they would have deviated, as they do, from St Luke's method, and have omitted so much that he relates. But if all the three Gospels were written within the same generation, at the instance of different Apostles, and to illustrate the aspects of our Lord's life which were of chief importance to those for whom they were intended, their combined harmony and independence is perfectly natural. From this point of view we confess we see no real difficulty—little more, in fact, than a curious and probably insoluble riddle — in the problem which has occupied so much attention—that of their combined agreement and difference.

"As regards the virtual agreement of the three writers," says Archbishop Thomson, "it may be said that in no other case would it be possible to find three writers so independent as to their matter, who showed such minute and abundant coincidences of expression; and that no other three writers have shown such a careful adherence to the very same forms of expression, who have also shown so great an independence in the selection and omission of subjects."—Introd., p. ix.

But when it is further observed that "by far the larger portion of this verbal agreement is found in the recital of the words of others, and particularly of the words of Jesus," a sufficient explanation seems

to us at once apparent. It is enough to say, that in no other case would it be possible to find three writers who were dealing, and who were profoundly conscious that they were dealing, with words of such supreme moment and of such divine import. It might be sufficient, indeed, from a Christian point of view, to refer to our Lord's express promise of divine assistance to His disciples in recalling His words. But it appears hardly necessary to call in this assistance to account satisfactorily for the phenomenon. Our Lord attached to Himself a select body of disciples, whose express mission it was to listen to His words, and to be able to bear witness to His deeds. Those words and deeds would be impressed upon their minds by the most solemn of all convictions; and the people to whom they belonged were peculiarly tenacious of words. Add to this, that the words themselves are the most pregnant and vivid ever uttered among men, and the problem which so much perplexes that mechanical criticism of which we have spoken seems sufficiently solved. The broad result remains, that we have three independent and harmonious accounts of our Lord's life and work, with respect to one of which even hostile criticism is forced to admit that it was written by a contemporary and perfectly competent authority; while, with respect to the other two, all internal difficulties vanish with this admission.

Such are the general conclusions which appear to us so effectively brought out in the Introduction to this commentary; and to any one desirous of apprehending the full force of the argument, we would recommend a perusal, first of Canon Cook's

Introduction to the Acts, and then of Archbishop Thomson's Introduction to the three first Gospels. The Introduction of Canon Cook is admirable for the thoroughness, the fairness, and the historic grasp with which he discusses every detail of the problem before him, and he incidentally throws most interesting light on the characteristics of St Luke's work in the Gospel as well as in the Acts. The theories of the leading German writers and of M. Renan are dealt with point by point, though in no mere controversial spirit. The internal and external evidences of authorship, the historical character of the book as a whole, and particularly of the discourses it records, the numerous points of minute accuracy which it exhibits,—all are illustrated with equal learning, lucidity, and moderation.

Archbishop Thomson's Introduction is marked by merits of a somewhat different kind. There is apparent throughout it the impatience of a vigorous common-sense with the subtle and inconsistent schemes he is discussing; as, for instance, when he summarises the results of criticism on St Matthew's Gospel.

"Perhaps," he says, "one of its uses is to teach us what it cannot do, and here its witness agrees not together. According to divers writers, Matthew is the oldest writer and not the oldest; a Greek writer, but a Hebrew; his work the foundation of the Gospel of Mark, but drawn from that earlier, simpler record; it is the work of an Apostle, but there are positive reasons against regarding it as from an Apostle's hand. Its line of teaching is clear and consistent; yet with skilful knife we can dissect out the various fibres of tendencies which make it so manifold and so little consistent with itself. Its unity is self-evident; and yet it never continued for two de-

cades the same, so active were the editors in making it afresh. Its inconsistencies with the other Gospels start out to careless eyes; and yet many hands were constantly at work bringing one Gospel to bear on another, and altering each by the light of the other. These being the results, we have a right to suspect the method: it is even allowable to doubt whether there can be any true principles on which results so discordant can be based."—Introd., p. xxxi.

We need a little of this rough common-sense to be brought to bear on the fine-spun theories with which the world has of late been perplexed. But the Archbishop is, perhaps, strongest in bringing out the substantial life and truth which the evangelical narratives present, and in urging the unreasonableness of imagining that such a result could have been produced by the artificial and piecemeal composition assumed by sceptical theories for the origin of the Gospels. It is one of the most remarkable facts in the case that, with all their brevity, the Gospels are proved by the experience of history to have produced the most vivid portraiture of a living person ever presented to the world. The fact that different views are taken of this Person, that His acts are differently understood and interpreted, in no way conflicts with this main result. It simply shows that the Person as thus depicted is in just the same position as if He were living among us —in the same position, in fact, as when He was upon earth. He is understood and appreciated variously in proportion to the capacity, the moral and intellectual disposition, of those who hear Him and behold Him. Accordingly, it is not too much to say, that within the first century after Christ every view of His life and character which has since been put forward was in substance represented. But no one can doubt that,

allowing for these inevitable variations, the character of Christ, as represented in the Gospels, has stamped itself upon the mind, alike of the Church and of the world, with a greater vividness and certainty than any other character in history: its life and its influence have radiated beyond the circle of those to whom the Gospels are a constant companion; and it lives almost unconsciously, among foes as well as among friends, as a potent moral and spiritual force.

"If," says the Archbishop, "it could be seriously apprehended that the Church and mankind would ever allow itself to be robbed of the divine picture and presentment of Christ because of some real or fancied discrepancy between the four Evangelists, that it would part with the precious substance of harmony for the sake of some shadow of harmony, never to be found in any books, and never promised to us in these, then we might tremble for the future of religion. But they have come down to us so far, not upon the strength of a historical argument that they were indeed what they are supposed to be, but upon the inward force, by which they first show us Christ, and then lead us captive to Christ. Never man spake like this man; never was love like this love; never such a life was seen on earth before; never did the dream of poet, never the instinct of hero-worship, imagine such a being with such wisdom on his lips, such love in his heart, with a character so balanced and complete, with claims so outspoken and so lofty, joined to so profound a humility and so gentle a kindness towards the gainsayer. If indeed, as Geiger and others tell us, he is but a disciple of Hillel, following exactly in his master's footsteps, let us see this Hillel brought forth, that we may admire another, also divine. Every one knows, and Delitzsch has taken the trouble to show, that there is indeed no comparison possible. The two genealogies may be difficult; the taxing of Cyrenius a perpetual problem; the day of the last passover may exercise critics to the end. But do or do not the four Gospels conduct us into the presence of the same Jesus?

This is the real issue. The Church has long since settled her conviction on this point; in the Gospels, each and all, she has known Christ."—Introd., p. lvii.

These considerations furnish the best introduction to the other great branch of the controversy with which these volumes had to deal—that, namely, which concerns the Gospel according to St John. Here, again, it is only reasonable to start from the broad fact that the consciousness of Christians has, from the earliest days of the Church to the present time, recognised a complete unity between the description of our Lord and of His teaching as presented by the fourth Gospel, and that which is presented by the three others. It is certainly a different picture—a picture drawn, as it were, from another point of view, exhibiting the character in new scenery, and in relation to other circumstances. But the instinct of the Church for eighteen centuries ought to be sufficient proof that there is no real variance between the two aspects. An assumption, however, of such a variance lies at the basis of all modern assaults on the authenticity of St John's Gospel. As we observed at the outset, it is alleged to be full of Alexandrian metaphysics, and the discourses it attributes to our Lord are pronounced incompatible with His style of teaching, as exhibited in the first three Gospels. It would seem a satisfactory answer to this objection to say that the point is eminently one to be decided by the general sense of readers of all ages, and not by the private and singular opinions of a few modern critics. As we have said, such questions can only be fairly judged by those who are in sympathy with the main current of teaching in the book or books in question. M. Renan sees arid metaphysics in the discourses

in St John. The all but unanimous feeling of the Christian Church of all ages, of Christians of all classes, cultured or uncultured, has been that these discourses are neither arid nor metaphysical, but animated by the deepest and truest feeling, and that they touch the most vital chords in human nature. On any other subject, if a critic found himself conspicuously at variance with the almost uniform verdict of mankind, he would probably have the modesty to begin to suspect himself; and at all events he would hesitate to make his idiosyncrasy the foundation of a new theory respecting the origin of the writings in question. Yet this is precisely the case with the question of the trustworthiness of St John's Gospel. It has made at least as deep an impression as either of the others upon the mind of Christians; it has entwined itself with their innermost convictions, and has furnished an integral part of all Christian thought; and they are now asked to suspect it, on the ground that to a few French and German critics, and to their followers in this country, all this conviction of the unity of the four Gospels is an illusion, and all this deep interest in our Lord's last discourses is imaginary! It ought to be recognised at the outset that the whole burden of proof, and that an enormous one, lies against critics who advance such an assertion. Of course, if definite evidence can be adduced to prove the late fabrication of St John's Gospel, there is an end of the matter, and we must accept the result—notwithstanding the tremendous shock it would give, not only to the Christian faith, but to our confidence in the trustworthiness of the moral and spiritual instincts of mankind. But it

ought to be distinctly recognised that it is the negative, and not the positive evidence, of which it may be demanded in such a case that it should be irrefragable. The harmony between the traditionary, or *primâ facie*, account of the origin of St John's Gospel and the facts of Christian thought and experience is so complete, that we have a right to demand something like a demonstration before we abandon the belief which is in possession of the ground.

We dwell on these considerations because they afford us the best means of estimating the position assumed by the most prominent representative of sceptical criticism on this subject in the present day. M. Renan practically avows that he has really no more solid ground to go upon in rejecting the claims of St John's Gospel than his own private inability to appreciate the discourses of the Saviour there recorded. In a very interesting article contributed last year (1880) to the Paris 'Revue Chrétienne,' M. Godet has drawn attention to the remarkable fluctuations of opinion which M. Renan has exhibited on this question. In the early editions of his 'Vie de Jésus' he acknowledged himself greatly impressed by the indications of authenticity presented by the narrative portions of the fourth Gospel. He dwelt on the slight traits of precision, the extraordinary freshness of the reminiscences of old age which it exhibits, as bespeaking its composition by an eye-witness—by the very Apostle whose name it bears. But he excepted the discourses of the Saviour. These seemed to him pretentious and dull tirades, having little moral meaning. Accordingly, in the manner customary with him, he used without hesitation as many of the facts in St John's narrative as he

pleased, while he inclined to the belief that the discourses could not have been reported by the son of Zebedee. But in the thirteenth edition of the same work M. Renan added a long appendix, in which the question is discussed in full. He confesses himself still struck with the indications of authenticity in the narrative; he pronounces that the decided adversaries of the traditional view impose on themselves a difficult task in tracing in such touches the hand of a forger. But he comes back at last to his old difficulty, that of the discourses; and he is unable to understand how all these metaphysics — these long pieces of theology and of rhetoric, as he still regards them—can have come from the hand of the fisherman of Galilee. So far, as M. Godet observes, the hesitation he expresses does credit to his desire to be impartial. In the end he says that this question of the authorship of the fourth Gospel is certainly the most singular in literary history.

"I do not know," he says, "any question of criticism where contrary appearances are so balanced, and hold the mind more completely in suspense."[1] "Of two things, one," he adds; "either the author of the fourth Gospel is a disciple of Jesus — an intimate disciple and of the earliest date—or else the author, in order to procure himself authority, has employed an artifice from the beginning of the book to the end, for the purpose of making it believed that he was a witness in the best possible position for stating the truth of the facts."

In the latter case, as he admits, the author would be no mere collector of legends; he would be a forger: "c'est un faussaire." He acknowledges the extreme

[1] Vie de Jésus, ed. 15, p. 537.

improbability of the book being due to a writer of this character; and concludes that at the first *coup d'œil* "it seems that the most natural hypothesis is to admit that all these writings"—the Gospel and the Epistles —"are really the work of John, the son of Zebedee." What considerations has he to oppose to this conclusion? An opinion that the book "is too little cited"—not that it is not cited at all—"in the most ancient Christian literature;" that nothing is less like what one would expect from the son of Zebedee; that the Greek in which it is written differs from the Palestinian Greek of the other Gospels; and "above all," that the ideas are of an entirely different order. "We are here amidst complete metaphysics of the school of Philo, and almost of Gnosticism; the discourses of Jesus reported by this supposed witness, this intimate disciple, are false, often insipid, impossible."[1] Lastly, there is the difficulty arising from a comparison of the style of the Gospel with that of the Apocalypse. Now if we put out of account the difference in the style, which may be variously accounted for, to what do these counter-considerations amount? Practically, to no more than M. Renan's opinion, that the discourses attributed to our Lord are insipid and impossible! The concurrent weight of all other internal evidence, and the continuous tradition of the Church, are to be set aside, because M. Renan finds discourses insipid which Christians for eighteen centuries have cherished as among the most precious parts of the sacred volume! And this is the kind of criticism on which the romances have been built, to which M. Renan owes his chief reputation.

[1] Vie de Jésus, ed. 15, p. 539.

M. Renan was not, in fact, prepared, in the appendix we have quoted, to pronounce definitely so extraordinary a verdict, and he left the matter in some doubt, still vindicating, however, his right to use the facts narrated in the Gospel as much as he thought good. But at length, in the volume entitled 'L'Église Chrétienne,' published in 1879, he has decided in favour of his dislike to the discourses, and against all the evidence he had recognised. He is, indeed, far from withdrawing his previous admissions respecting the excellences of the narrative. "The fourth Gospel," he says, "though a writing of no value for the purpose of knowing how Jesus spoke, is superior to the Synoptic Gospels in respect to matters of fact" (p. 58). There are traits "which assert for the pseudo-John a superior historic value to Mark and the pseudo-Matthew" (p. 59). But we come back to the old objection, and are told that "nothing is more fatiguing" (p. 51) than the long discussions in the Gospel. The conclusion at length reached, or suggested, is that the book may have been written by a disciple of the Apostle, who, some twenty-five years after his death, thought himself authorised to speak in his name. But once launched in this region of conjecture, M. Renan makes a still wilder venture, and actually suggests that one of the persons who were concerned with the forging of the Johannine writings was the Gnostic Cerinthus—the very heretic against whom, according to all tradition, they were written! It is surely unnecessary to say anything more in answer to such a supposition than that Polycarp, the disciple of St John, lived till the year 155 or 156—a quarter of a century after the supposed forgery—and that his disciple, Irenæus, a strenuous opponent, moreover, of

Gnosticism, treats the Gospel without the slightest hesitation as the work of St John. The position of Polycarp and Irenæus really decides the question for any one who prefers definite historic testimony to his own fancies. The case is excellently summarised as follows by Canon Westcott, Introd., p. xxx :—

"It is, however, with Polycarp and Papias that the decisive testimony to St John's writings really begins. Recent investigations, independent of all theological interests, have fixed the martyrdom of Polycarp in 155–56 A.D. (see Lightfoot, 'Contemporary Review,' 1875, p. 838). At the time of his death he had been a Christian for eighty-six years (Mart. Polyc., c. ix.). He must then have been alive during the greater part of St John's residence in Asia, and there is no reason for questioning the truth of the statements, that he 'associated with the Apostles in Asia,'—*e.g.*, John, Andrew, Philip (comp. Lightfoot's 'Colossians,' p. 45 f.)—'and was intrusted with the oversight of the Church in Smyrna by those who were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Lord' (Euseb., H. E., iii. 26; comp. Iren., c. Hær., iii. 3, 4). Thus, like St John himself, he lived to unite two ages. When already old, he used to speak to his scholars of his intercourse 'with John and the rest of those who had seen the Lord' (Iren., Ep. ad Flor., § 2); and Irenæus, in his later years, vividly recalled the teaching which he had heard from him as a boy (Iren., l. c.; comp. c. Hær., iii. 3, 4). There is no room in this brief succession for the introduction of new writings under the name of St John. Irenæus cannot with any reason be supposed to have assigned to the fourth Gospel the place which he gives to it unless he had received it with the sanction of Polycarp. The person of Polycarp, the living sign of the unity of the faith of the first and second centuries, is in itself a sure proof of the apostolicity of the Gospel. Is it conceivable that in his lifetime such a revolution was accomplished that his disciple Irenæus was not only deceived as to the authorship of the book, but was absolutely unaware that the continuity of the tradition in which he boasted had been completely broken?"

M. Renan has acquired of late such unwarrantable influence in some quarters, that it would seem worth while thus to draw attention to the baselessness and the inconsistency of his speculations on one of the most vital points in this great controversy. But we are chiefly concerned with him for the reason previously mentioned. It would appear to be the main result of the long critical war, in which he is now the last and most prominent combatant on the negative side, that the issue really turns on the question of the spiritual meaning and moral force of the words and discourses attributed to our Lord in the fourth Gospel. A man need not be an "apologist"—he may even be a disciple of M. Renan—in order to acknowledge that every other consideration is in favour of the old tradition that the Gospel is really the work of St John, the beloved disciple. When the question, after long debate, is thus fairly reduced to this issue, there cannot, we think, be the slightest practical doubt how the common-sense of the great majority of unprejudiced minds will decide it. There may be persons, like M. Renan, who will always remain impenetrable to the spiritual force of the discourses reported in the Gospel. But no real weight will attach in the long-run to these idiosyncrasies. Objections founded on such private opinions and prejudices have, indeed, been advanced of late with inconceivable presumptuousness. Mr Matthew Arnold, for instance, is always ready to pronounce that certain words "were either a mistake, or they are not really the very words Jesus said,"[1] simply because Mr Arnold himself cannot understand them. Dr Abbott, in the article on the Gospels already referred to, can similarly urge that "it is difficult to believe"

[1] Literature and Dogma, p. 151.

that our Lord uttered certain parables in their present shape; and for his part he would draw quite the opposite moral from the parable of the Unjust Judge from that which is said to have been drawn by our Lord. One would think it might occur to writers of this school that, supposing the passages in question to have been really spoken by our Lord, it is possible His meaning may escape their comprehension or even be beyond it. The excellent saying which is attributed to the present Master of Trinity College, Cambridge,[1] at a meeting of Fellows, might with advantage be recommended to such critics. "Let us remember that we are none of us infallible—not even the youngest of us." It is possible, to say the least of it, that the convictions of Christian divines respecting the profound significance of our Lord's words in St John's Gospel and elsewhere are true. But the admission of the possibility leaves us face to face with the simple historic evidence; and, as we have endeavoured to illustrate, the result of the great critical debate of the last two generations is that the balance of this evidence is decisively in favour of the old traditions.

It was, however, of the utmost importance, that in respect to St John's Gospel these facts and truths should be developed in the 'Speaker's Commentary' by a master-hand; and this immense service has been rendered by Canon Westcott. In a most exhaustive Introduction he has examined minutely all the questions which have been raised respecting the Gospel. He has adduced a mass of interesting considerations from internal evidence, which show the author to have been a Jew, a Jew of Palestine, an eye-witness, and an Apostle, and that this Apostle could be no other than

[1] The late Dr Thompson.

St John. He has analysed in detail the plan, the style, the historic exactness of the book, and has discussed most thoroughly its relation to the other apostolic writings. He has shown the vital distinction of St John's doctrine of the Logos from that of Philo and the Alexandrian school. Above all, both in the Introduction and in the exhaustive notes of the Commentary, he has brought out the intense vital and moral force inherent in the characteristic elements of the Gospel. In parts of this criticism, indeed, he had been in some measure preceded by Dr Sanday, in his valuable book on the 'Authorship and Historical Character of the Fourth Gospel'; but the whole subject has been treated afresh with a wealth of thought, as well as of learning, which it would be difficult to parallel in any other work on the same subject. Lest we should seem to be giving too indiscriminate praise, we will venture an opinion that the analysis is sometimes too minute and over-refined; and this defect, or excess, of criticism appears, perhaps, still more strongly in the Commentary than in the Introduction. But if it be an error, it is an error prompted by profound study and by ardent enthusiasm. We do not hesitate to say that, combining the Introduction and the Commentary, the English reader is placed in a position of advantage for studying this Gospel such as has not hitherto been enjoyed by even the most learned scholars. The work must have been one of years, and Canon Westcott has placed the Church under an incalculable obligation by such a contribution to its resources for understanding the Scriptures.

Before dismissing this subject, our readers will be glad to be informed of a most important addition to our materials for New Testament criticism, to which

we referred at the commencement of this article, and which has only just been brought to the notice of the learned world. An American divine, indeed, Dr Ezra Abbot—to be carefully distinguished from the English divine with a similar name, whose strange theories we have noticed above—called attention to the discovery, in a valuable summary he published last year of the external evidence in support of St John's Gospel. But we believe that no account of it has yet been given in any English book, and it was only a few weeks ago that it was noticed as it deserves in Germany. A few words of explanation will explain its importance. The monstrous theory as to the late origin of our Gospels maintained by the author of 'Supernatural Religion' obliged him to deny not only that Justin Martyr was acquainted with St John's Gospel, but even with any of the other three. A great stumbling-block in the way of this theory was the fact that Justin's pupil Tatian was not only acquainted with all four Gospels, but digested them into a single narrative, or 'Harmony,' known by the name of 'Diatessaron.' Against this difficulty the author of 'Supernatural Religion' struggled with his characteristic recklessness of assertion. There was no authority for saying that Tatian's Gospel was a harmony of four Gospels at all; the name 'Diatessaron' was not given to it by Tatian himself; no writer before the fifth century had seen the work; Tatian did not compose any harmony at all, but simply made use of the same Gospel as his master, Justin Martyr—namely, the Gospel according to the Hebrews. In the 'Contemporary Review' for May 1877, Bishop Lightfoot, with his usual thoroughness, collected all that ancient writers had told us about Tatian's work, and showed how

entirely opposed to the evidence were the assertions we have quoted. But even when Lightfoot wrote, new evidence had come to light, of which he was not at the time aware, removing all need for indirect argumentation as to the character of Tatian's 'Diatessaron,' by enabling us, in a great measure, to restore the work itself. It was already known that the celebrated Syrian Father, Ephraim (who died about 378), wrote an exposition of it. Of this exposition an Armenian translation has been preserved. It was even printed so far back as 1836, and was translated into Latin in 1841 by Aucher, of the Mechitarist Monastery at Venice; and this translation, amended and annotated, was published by Dr George Moesinger in 1876. Even this translation of Moesinger has as yet attracted but scant attention. With all the rapidity of modern communication, it is strange that literary news should travel so slowly that a new mine could be open for forty-five years, and have been made perfectly accessible for five years, before any rush of scholars was made to its treasures. Moesinger's work was made use of by Abbot (p. 55), as we have already mentioned; and through him it seems to have become known to Dr Harnack, who has just published a very full account of it in the last number of Brieger's 'Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte.' Our readers can easily imagine what important use can be made, both in the study of the New Testament text and of certain problems of primitive Church History, of a harmony of the Gospels written so soon as the third quarter of the second century. Harnack pronounces this to be the most important of recent discoveries, entitled to rank even above Bryennius's recovery of the missing portion of St Clement's Epistle. We shall not attempt to

decide the invidious question, with which of the newly recovered treasures we should now be most sorry to part; but it may be owned that, in the department of New Testament criticism, for which the discovery of Bryennius did little or nothing, the restoration of Tatian's 'Diatessaron' makes a more important addition to our stores than any gain that has been made since Tischendorf's discovery of the Sinaitic Manuscript.

We must not mislead our readers, however, when we speak of the restoration of Tatian's 'Diatessaron.' The restoration does not pretend to be perfect. What has been recovered is not the work itself, but Ephraim's commentary on it; and we only gain the 'Diatessaron' so far as it is possible to separate text from commentary. This cannot always be done with certainty, so that there are cases where we cannot be sure whether what we read is Ephraim's or Tatian's. We cannot be sure, either, that Ephraim does not skip, and so his silence does not warrant us in asserting that this or that verse which he leaves out was absent from Tatian's Harmony. Nor, again, can we be sure, when Ephraim quotes passages not immediately before him, that he does not quote from memory. But when every allowance has been made for possible inaccuracy in the inferences we draw from the testimony of our new witness, it remains that a flood of light has been poured on the whole subject of Tatian's Harmony; that we now know with certainty its general plan, the materials which it used, and the order which it followed.

Our readers will not be surprised to hear that the opinion is amply confirmed, which prevailed without question for hundreds of years, until in this century it

first occurred to any one to doubt it, that Tatian's work was called 'Diatessaron' because it was based on four Gospels—the same four that we venerate now. It is well in every controversy to know what admitted facts there are which neither party ventures to dispute. In the controversy concerning the Gospels it has not been necessary to produce any testimony later than the last decade of the second century, that being a period of which the Christian remains are so abundant that there is no room for debate what was then the opinion of the Church. On this point Strauss is an unimpeachable witness. He says:—

"Thus much is settled, that towards the end of the second century after Christ we find the same four Gospels which we now possess recognised in the Church, and cited numbers of times by the three prominent Church teachers, Irenæus in Gaul, Clement in Alexandria, and Tertullian in Carthage, as the writings of the Apostles and disciples of the Apostles whose names they bear. It is true that there were a considerable number of other Gospels in circulation. There was a Gospel of the Hebrews and of the Egyptians, of Peter, of Bartholomew, of Thomas, of Matthias, nay, of the Twelve Apostles, which were not only used by heretical parties, but even occasionally appealed to by orthodox Church teachers. Nevertheless, from that time and forward these four were regarded as the specially trustworthy foundations of Christian faith. If we ask, Why only these four, neither more nor less? Irenæus supplies the answer."—Strauss, Das Leben Jesu für das deutsche Volk bearbeitet, p. 47.

Strauss then proceeds to quote the analogies adduced by Irenæus: there are four quarters of the world; four winds; four forms of the cherubims, therefore four Gospels; but Strauss fully acknowledges that these are not to be regarded as the reasons

why Irenæus accepted four Gospels, neither more nor fewer, but only as the way in which he justifies, in conformity with the spirit of his age, a belief formed on other grounds. It is plain that this consideration pushes back the testimony of Irenæus to a period far earlier than his own age. For what a number of years must our four Gospels have been enthroned in a position of pre-eminence, out of reach of rivalry from any conflicting record of our Saviour's life, ere it could occur to any one to regard the fourfold number as part of a divine scheme, woven into the whole constitution of the world, prefigured in Old Testament manifestations, and followed in the whole course of God's revelations to man! But we have now direct evidence that the four Gospels held this position of pre-eminence in the generation anterior to Irenæus. Some persons, perhaps, might have hoped through Tatian's means to get a glimpse of that fifth Gospel, the traces of which the author of 'Supernatural Religion' discovers so abundantly where other people think that they can recognise quotations from our four, and which in particular was supposed to be Justin's chief authority for the facts of our Saviour's life. But no; this timid and shrinking Gospel keeps pertinaciously out of sight, and when Tatian sets himself to digest into a single narrative the Gospel facts which he has learned from various sources, it is only our four which he acknowledges as authorities and whose narratives he joins together.

It is of course implied in what has been said that the fourth Gospel takes its due place with the others among Tatian's authorities. It had been already known that the 'Diatessaron' began with

St John's opening, "In the beginning was the Word"; and we can now say with certainty that St John's Gospel was with tolerable completeness woven into the work. Tatian began with the first five verses, adopting the punctuation general among early Christian writers. "Apart from Him hath been made no one thing. That which hath been made was life in Him." Then followed, according to Moesinger's summary, St Luke i., then Matt. i. 18-25; then St Luke ii., and so on. St Matthew's Gospel seems to have furnished the framework of the narrative, and the selections from St John seem to have all been fitted into a single year of our Lord's ministry, the discourse with Nicodemus, for example, being placed during our Lord's last residence in Jerusalem, after Matt. xxi. 19-22.

If the recovery of Tatian disposes of one controversy, it is easy to foresee that it will open up several others; and, in particular, it is plain, from Harnack's review, that the authority of Tatian will be used to cast doubts on the trustworthiness, in certain important features, of the New Testament text, as known to us by the testimony of the oldest uncials and of third-century citations. It is obviously unreasonable to attach so much weight, for this purpose, to the testimony of one who was so arbitrary in his mode of proceeding as Tatian, from the very nature of his work, was obliged to be, when his testimony is opposed to that of witnesses who had no other object than faithfully to reproduce what had been handed down to them. Tatian, for instance, if we may trust the silence of Ephraim as sufficient evidence, not only makes no use of the disputed verses in St Mark, nor of the doubtful

clause in Luke xxiv. 51, but not even of St Matthew xxviii. 16-20. The narrative of the Ascension is absent. The harmony closes with St John xxi. 19-22 and Luke xxiv. 49. It is a characteristic instance of hasty German criticism that Harnack should see in this an evidence for the early date of the harmony. Not to speak of a multitude of other proofs, the Book of the Acts of the Apostles sufficiently shows that the doctrine "He ascended into heaven" was part of the belief of the Church long before the time of Tatian; and no stress can be laid on the silence of one who, even if orthodox, was not bound to speak, and had a perfect right to close his work when he did, but who was notoriously under the influence of dogmatic views not those of Christians in general. But the whole subject of Tatian's readings will, as Harnack admits, require long and thorough discussion, and we cannot here enter upon it.

We must return for a moment to the work which has been the main subject of this article. We can only refer briefly to the Commentary of our English divines on the sacred text, as we have been more concerned to draw attention to the general importance of these two volumes in relation to current controversy, than to their exegetical details, however valuable. But we must make one reference to this branch of the subject, in order to tender a due acknowledgment to another contributor, of whose work we have not yet had an opportunity of speaking. We refer to the notes of the Bishop of Chester on the Acts of the Apostles. We are not sure that they are not, on the whole, the very best notes contained in these, or any previous, volumes. They notice every question of any

consequence, and in point of learning and judgment they are of the highest order. In addition to this, they are marked by the valuable characteristic of as much condensation as is compatible with clearness: it would be difficult to find in them a superfluous word, and they are always definite and to the point. We must own we think the notes to the text of St Matthew and St Luke are not so satisfactory as the rest of the volume; but, as has been mentioned, Dean Mansel died before completing those on the first Gospel, and the Bishop of St David's had to plead the pressure of episcopal duties for failing to give the final revision to those on the third. But Canon Cook's additions and numerous excursuses supply all essential necessities, and his own work on St Mark's text is of the excellence to be expected of him.

We deliberately abstain from discussing the principles on which the text itself has been dealt with, since this topic, again, would lead us into too many details for our present purpose. But we will venture to express our satisfaction that Canon Cook has himself by no means given way to the tendency, which has of late been predominant, to attach unique and decisive importance to the evidence of the great Uncial MSS. of the fourth century. Where we have distinct evidence that a writer of the second century used a text which differs from that of those MSS., it is a little arbitrary to override his testimony by that of a copyist of a later date. The most interesting point, perhaps, in respect to which this question arises, is that of the authenticity of the concluding verses of St Mark's Gospel. Canon Cook, in a very interesting excursus, vindicates their authenticity; and his arguments appear to us decisive. Briefly, the case stands as

follows. The form which includes the verses has in its favour testimony which proves it to have been accepted in the second century. The form which omits the verses has no testimony earlier than the fourth. The testimony in their favour, moreover, is Western, while the testimony against them is Eastern; and it is generally admitted that St Mark's Gospel was written for Western readers, and probably for readers at Rome. The fact that there is no authority for omitting the verses, earlier than that of Eusebius, would of itself seem decisive in their favour. Neither Origen nor any other writer anterior to Eusebius took notice that there was anything abrupt or unusual in the manner in which St Mark's Gospel came to a close. In short, as Canon Cook concludes, "the evidence of the immense majority of MSS., of ancient versions, of early Fathers, and of internal structure," is all in their favour; while, on the other side, there is practically the single authority of Eusebius. In this, as in other instances of more moment, the first negative conclusions of foreign criticism are being steadily checked. The conclusion at which Canon Cook arrived is ably supported by Keil, in his Commentary on St Mark, published in 1879; and even Hilgenfeld, whose rationalistic position we have noticed above, observes, in his 'Einleitung' (p. 513), published in 1875, that the concluding verses, "to which testimony is borne by Irenæus, as well as by the Italic and Peschito versions, are in no case to be set aside offhand as unauthentic."

On the whole, the English Church is to be warmly congratulated on the boon which has in these volumes been bestowed upon it in this critical juncture of religious thought. Englishmen desire, in the first instance, simply to be informed what are the historic

and literary facts with which they have to deal in the Scriptures of the New Testament. They will not in the end be led away by a French romancer or a German theorist, or by a prejudiced sceptic in this country, if only they are assured that they have in their hands the materials for judging for themselves of the facts and arguments on which the controversy turns. That opportunity is presented to them in these volumes, and it is to this characteristic that we have been chiefly anxious to do justice. The reader, indeed, who seeks edification rather than controversy will find it abundantly in this 'Commentary'; but, at the same time, any one who desires to enter into such questions as we have been discussing will find all the necessary materials ready to his hand, and able and impartial guides to direct him in the use of them. The number of works in elucidation of the Scriptures which have appeared of late years is extraordinary, alike at home and abroad. But no work of the kind has, on the whole, been so satisfactory as the 'Speaker's Commentary,' and the present instalment of it deserves the highest praise.

THE END.

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